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Cover picture: Rembrandt's "Christ Presented to the People", drypoint/engraving, 1655, on show in the exhibition *Rembrandt and the Passion*, at the British Museum until April 29.

## The harvest of sorcery

Natalie Zemon Davis

CARLO GINZBURG  
*The Night Battles: Witchcraft and Agrarian Cults in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*  
Translated by John and Anne Tedeschi  
209pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £9.95.  
0710095074

What were the beliefs and practices in the peasant world that lay behind accusations of diabolic witchcraft in the period from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries? Confessions of flights to Sabbaths and of orgies with the devil, many of them extracted under torture or during a panic of accusation, have been difficult to believe, and most scholars have rejected the view of Jules Michelet and Margaret Murray that these rites were the continuation of a still meaningful pagan religion. Rather, historians have seen devil worship as a creation of the late medieval clergy, gradually imposed on villagers and townsfolk and turning their practical magic into a harmful witch, who went to real Sabbaths and whose power came from a demonic pact. The vulnerability of peasant culture to this transformation has been explained by intensified socio-economic strains in village life and by folk beliefs about the occult sources of fortune and misfortune.

The structure of these popular beliefs is the subject of these fascinating books by two of Europe's most distinguished historians. Carlo Ginzburg's *Night Battles*, published in 1966 as *I Benandanti* or the "doers of good", is at last offered to an English-reading public in the smooth translation of John and Anne Tedeschi. His sources are the records of the Friulian inquisition from 1575 to 1676, some of them printed in an appendix. Here peasants recount experiences so evidently surprising to their questioners, so unlike what inquisitors understand as "superstition" or heresy, that Ginzburg can conclude that they represent independent village beliefs. Men and women, singled out because they were born with cauls and referring to themselves as *benandanti*, go into a swoon during the four seasonal festivals of Ember Days; their souls leave their bodies and spend the night in a special place, playing

games together, fighting with fennel stalks against witches and warlocks armed with sorghum and in some cases joining processions of dead souls from Purgatory and Hell. If the fennel stalks win their jousts, the village fields will be fertile; if the sorghum wins there will be want. Once their souls are back in their bodies, the *benandanti* serve their neighbours further, bringing messages back from the dead, determining whether someone has been bewitched and curing people. Only in the seventeenth century, under the pressure of the inquisitors, did some of the Friulian "doers of good" modify parts of their story and redefine themselves as witches who had been at the devil's Sabbath.

Seeking analogous belief systems elsewhere, Ginzburg finds evidence from sixteenth and seventeenth-century Livonia and Riga of persons who fell into trances and who said their souls, in the form of werewolves, fought against witches for the abundance of the crops. Earlier traditions from many parts of Western Europe describe nocturnal gatherings of the souls of "good women", presided over by a goddess named variously Abundia or Perchia or Diana; once returned, the women could give people news of dead relatives and perform other services. Ginzburg suggests that what we have still alive in 1570 in the relatively isolated Friuli are remnants of "a single agrarian cult". He urges scholars to study its initial character and diffusion in Europe, along with its deformation into diabolic witchcraft.

Popular beliefs and imaginary happenings, yes, but remnants of a fertility cult, no, was the reaction of Norman Cohn to the initial Italian publication of Ginzburg's book. And Ginzburg himself points out that the *benandanti* never claim to have been physically present at their ritual jousts; they are good Catholics, attending mass and confession, summoned under the "good-doers" banner by an angel of Christ. None the less, even in their 1570 form, the *benandanti* have some of the marks of cult leaders: shamanic figures with a line of transmission (the caul, given them by their mothers); visions associated with certain feast days which legitimate their authority; enough of a communication network so that they know of each other and people know of them; and magical curing and the lifting of spells. Ginzburg has thus given us a major new understanding of the complex possibilities in European peasant religion as well as demonstrating how to read judicial documents so as to extract popular beliefs.

*The Night Battles* does leave us guessing,

however, about the contemporary meaning of the *benandanti* to the Friulian villagers. More is going on in their activities than can be explained only by reference to similar belief systems elsewhere or to age-old concerns for crops and sickness. For example, there was a sexual division of labour among the *benandanti*: men and women both went out to the ritual agrarian jousts, but usually not together, and women were specialists in seeing the processions of the dead. There was also a change in the relation of the *benandanti* to the witches even before the former began to define themselves as the latter. Traditionally the doers of good never named the people against whom they had fought in the nocturnal battles, else they would be beaten black and blue by them in their real bodies. (This is a peacekeeping mechanism, one that prevents the dualism of the spirit world being carried over too fully into the daily life of the village.) But in the course of their interrogations, indeed in the earliest ones, some *benandanti* began to identify specific witches, most of them women. Clearly one would like to understand how "the remnant of an agrarian cult" was continuously renewed and changed by the social and symbolic facts of Friulian village life in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In *La Sorcière de Jassin* we move from Friuli to Gascony, where Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie shows us the peasant image of the witch and witchcraft accusations as they interact with village quarrels over several centuries. He starts with the poem *Françoüneto* by the Agen hairdresser-poet, Jacques Jassin, reproduced here in facsimile in Gascon and French from the original edition of 1842. Jassin collected the story from a nearby village, Estanquet, where "Françoüneto's house" still existed (and still exists today). During the sixteenth-century Wars of Religion, the beautiful Françoüneto, a splendid dancer and singer, is the envy of all the village girls and the despair of all the lads, especially of a Catholic soldier, Marcel, who considers himself her intended, and of the worthy but poor blacksmith, Pascal, who secretly loves her. At a New Year's Eve festivity a sorcerer-magician appears, denounces her as a witch sold to the devil by her absent Huguenot father and warns that whoever marries her will be killed by the devil. Many things then fall into place for the villagers, such as arm injuries to Pascal and another suitor while in her presence, and her inexplicably productive farm, spared by hailstorms while others suffered. Further events confirm that

Françoüneto is a witch (thunder striking when she tries to kiss the statue of the Virgin at a pilgrimage site), and only the loyal Pascal prevents her from being burned by the incensed peasants. His love for Françoüneto, now returned by the chastened beauty, finally moves Marcel to confess that out of jealousy he had paid the sorcerer to denounce Françoüneto; all the rest was coincidence. Pascal and Françoüneto marry without evil consequences for the groom, expected by some villagers even after Marcel's avowal. "Oh, never more will we believe in witches" is the last line of Jassin's poem, but Le Roy Ladurie suggests that in a village like Estanquet some people simply concluded that Françoüneto was a witch who had won.

From Jassin's *Françoüneto*, Le Roy Ladurie elegantly distils the traits of the Gascon witch as defined by peasants: a person who can both help others and harm others, though not always fully conscious of her powers; who has an evil eye; who sends hail on fields, hurts men's arms, threatens their fertility and saps their vigour; a person part of a suspect family whose fortunes are increased at others' expense in an economy of scarcity. (Despite some overlap, the local Gascon witch is different from the image of Alan Macfarlane's poor Essex witch, calling down curses on those who don't give her charity.)

There is only a faint whiff of the werewolf in Françoüneto's village, or at least as reported by Jassin in 1842, but the shamanic past is more sharply evoked in earlier cases whose structure allows Le Roy Ladurie to get at independent peasant beliefs. In 1785-7, the well-off Mimalé family - father, mother and son - in nearby Montesquiou sue their jealous neighbours for calling them witches and werewolves; among the qualities added to the Gascon witch are bad odours emanating from their house and the acquiring of good fortune by the mandrake root. In 1608 a Béarnais peasant is tried for killing his wife. In his self-defence he constructs the local portrait of a witch: she flew out of bed, took the form of a goat and bit his hand; she harmed babies; she restored people as well as bewitching them, etc. In all these cases, the devil's aid is insisted on, but the Sabbaths of the learned clergy play no role.

To conclude his book, Le Roy Ladurie returns from the long history of an image to Françoüneto. Like many accusations of sorcery, the one against her never generated a criminal case, so Jassin's details cannot be verified in the archives. Instead Le Roy Ladurie

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makes a skilful analysis of motifs and names and shows that the events in Estanquet could not have occurred during the Wars of Religion — "for once Jasmin was poorly informed" — but at the end of the seventeenth century, after the height of the witch scare and a more plausible time for Franconeto's "happy end". (One argument he uses to locate Franconeto's story in the seventeenth century, however, is unconvincing: that a New Year's festivity seems unlikely before 1566 in Gascony, for up till then the year changed its number only at Annunciation Day in March. But this dating system did not prevent January 1 from being considered the first day of the year and having festivities and gifts associated with it through the late Middle Ages and sixteenth century. All the rest of Le Roy Ladurie's arguments for a seventeenth-century date are persuasive.) Quite apart from the history of witchcraft, this chapter is a valuable contribution to the workings of collective memory, encapsulating the past by references to buildings and pilgrimage traditions and passing it on like inheritance property from generation to generation.

The only subject that gets short-changed in *La Sorcière de Jasmin* is the poet. Appreciated by Le Roy Ladurie as a collector and autodidact, Jasmin also had his own intentions in

composing *Franconeto*. Proud of his hairdresser's craft, even in front of literary visitors from Paris, stubborn defender of writing in Gascon ("I cannot desert my mother-tongue . . . the language of the farmer and grape-gatherers . . . who love to hear my songs"), Jasmin performed his poems throughout his region and gave the contributions he received to charity. A moderate Catholic in the reign of Louis Philippe, he sought social peace and reasonable liberty. If it was he, rather than folk tradition, that mislocated Franconeto in the sixteenth century, it was partly because it seemed plausible to connect excessive zeal against witches with excessive zeal against Huguenots. Reciting now Franconeto's words, now Pascal's before the citizens of Toulouse in 1840, Jasmin made human jealousy the source of witchcraft accusations, to which an innocent victim could add fuel by her insouciant concentration on herself.

Different though Jasmin's Franconeto was from Michelet's rebellious cult woman of his *Sorcière* twenty years later, both men wanted to set the understanding of popular life on a new track. Through their scholarship and original reflection, Carlo Ginzburg and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie here contribute to the same goal.



"A Peasant Couple Fighting" by Johan Lis (Holstein c 1595/6 – Venice c 1629/30) in the exhibition German Drawings from a Private Collection in the Print Room at the British Museum until April 29.

## Five centuries of sin

John Bossy

JEAN DELUMEAU

*Le Pêché et la peur: La culpabilisation en Occident (XIII-XVIII siècles)*  
741pp. Paris: Fayard. 160fr.  
2 213 01306 3

*Le Pêché et la peur* is a continuation of Jean Delumeau's *La Peur en Occident*, which came out five years ago. It covers the five centuries in 627 pages of closely printed text. Its point of departure is the enactment of universal annual confession by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, so that it provides a sort of sequel to Jacques Le Goff's *La Naissance du purgatoire*, which in method it resembles. I am not sure of the reason for its *terminus ad quem*, since Delumeau obviously believes that the excessive inculcation of guilt continued to be characteristic of Catholicism, with which he is mainly, though not entirely concerned, until just the other day.

Anglophone readers, who would do better to dip into the book, than try to read it all at once, will need some indication of where Delumeau comes in and what he is trying to do. A liberal Catholic of conciliatory views, he began his career with a 'Braudeillean' thesis on the social and economic history of Rome in the later sixteenth century, and has become known to a wider public in France for a defence of modernized Catholicism against the objections of Pierre Chaunu, ex-*Annaliste*, radical quantifier, and likewise an exponent, in various senses, of the *longue durée*. Chaunu, known to early-modern historians for the baroque quantifications of his *Seville et l'Atlantique*, is also an evangelical Protestant, and, somewhat in the manner of Edward Norman dealing with the World Council of Churches, set out in defence of pre-conciliar Catholicism, saints, candles, rosaries, Sacred Heart and all, as a witness to the otherness of the holy submerged by Catholic progressivism. Delumeau's answer has been to undermine the *bona fides* of traditional, or Counter-Reformation, Catholicism as a true representation of Christianity; to write up the fallings of *Jeau la Chrétienne*.

On a previous occasion, in *Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire*, he had written briefly of the "legend of the Christian Middle Ages", and reduced most of medieval popular Christianity to magic. Now he has written at length about the guilt-inducing, life-destroying and generally anti-humanistic tenor of Catholic pastoral and spiritual teaching between the line of Pope Innocent III and the Enlightenment. These two views may seem incompatible, and ultimately I think they are. To understand how Delumeau reconciles them, one needs to read *La Peur en Occident*, where he launches (excessively in my view) between the two views, the Catholic and the secular, the

relevant time were about worldly things like plague, and those of the "élite", which were about guilt, salvation and the after life. The doctrine of *Le Pêché et la peur* — perhaps one should say axiom, since it is taken for granted — is that from the later Middle Ages, partly by the cultivation of objects of popular fear like plague, partly by the joint effect of two reformations, this attitude became transferred to the masses in what is called a process of "acculturation". Either way the history of Catholicism is being interpreted with a heavier dose of Gramscian culture-conflict than I think it can stand, and signs of spontaneous popular participation in its theory and practice, guilt-ridden or skittish, fearful or loving, are rather neglected.

It says something about the ecumenicity of Influences in Delumeau's work that, where Gramscian culture-conflict and the global history of mentalities preached by Lucien Febvre are generally held to be incompatible, Delumeau has done his best to reconcile them. His polemical intention has been to liberate Catholicism from the weight of its past; his historiographical intention has been, as Febvre suggested, to write the history of an emotion. Here, as often, Febvre has not been a force for clarity: I don't know whether a history of fear is really an intelligible project; but, if it is, the subject surely needs defining rather exactly. Even allowing that fears of a cruder or more visceral kind have been dealt with in the previous volume, we are still left with something which covers 'guilt', *contemptus mundi*, apprehension about hell (or purgatory), fire, macabre fascination with death, or simple gloom and despondency. The effect is of lumping.

This is a pity, because, although the book does not contain anything as entertaining as the questionnaire for ghosts which Delumeau dug up in *La Peur en Occident*, it does represent an attempt to write something like a history of the theory of sin during a quarter of the life of Christianity in the West. Very properly, this takes the form of a history of the seven deadly sins from which anyone will learn a good deal. Delumeau is particularly helpful on the history of sloth or *accidie*, which has needed going into; on lechery he has reliable guides in J. T. Noonan and Thomas Teitzler. The discussion of envy, on the other hand, which is a rather central topic, depends a great deal on a study, not as yet fully published, by M. Vincent-Cassy, about whose method (quantitative), and conclusions (rise of the bourgeoisie), I should like to be better convinced. It runs against the tenor of a good deal of writing about the subject in modern times, which is that (as most medieval commentators thought) envy is endemic in peasant populations. The subject was eminently worth attempting, and ought to be pursued further, though which does not really tell me what the

I would hope for a stronger recognition than Delumeau allows that the seven deadly sins, in so far as they formed a system, were a system of collective or community ethics rather than a guide to individual salvation; and also that they ceased to be employed as a monitor for the behaviour of Christians after the sixteenth century. The quotation from Lefèvre d'Étaples, with which he begins, to the effect that the only thing a Christian has to fear is himself (Erasmus said much the same), seems to me to mark more of a watershed than he makes it.

I would hope, too, that we shall not hear too much more of the term "culpabilisation". Not only is it a frightful coinage in itself, it really is not at all clear what it means, how it relates to contemporary language (as about "condition" and "attrition"), or how it differs from other methods of making people sorry or prudent. It would be defensible, and in line with medieval terminology, if it meant the idea of inhibiting unchristian behaviour through the instilling of interior guilt (*culpa*), not by the erection of exterior penitentials (*poena*). But since Delumeau spends much of his time describing the pains alleged of purgatory and hell he cannot be using it in this sense. By adopting a loose terminology he seems to me to have prevented himself from getting his problems down to the fine point at which they might be fruitfully discussed.

This may seem an unenthusiastic welcome for a book which has evidently been a labour of love and contains a great deal of useful knowledge. If it is more unenthusiastic than it ought to be it is, to be frank, as much the author's fault as the reviewer's, for he has made very little effort to be read. This is becoming a frightful habit among distinguished French historians, many of whose works give the impression that the art of historical composition is in a state of extreme decadence. *UN SUJET . . . ?*, as Delumeau's dismal teachers were fond of saying. Well, where's Bloch? Where's Pirenne? Nay, where's Lévi-Strauss? Where's *Peuples et Civilisations*?

*Seventeenth-Century Lancashire: Essays Presented to J. J. Bagley*. Volume 132 of the *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, has recently been published under the editorship of J. I. Kermode and C. B. Phillips (194pp. Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire/Alan Sutton, Palsgrave, Gloucester. £14. ISSN 0140-332X). Contributions include "The recurrent riots at Childwall in May 1600" by R. G. Dottle, "The commission of the peace in Lancashire, 1603-1642" by D. J. Wilkinson, "Pirates and law in the Civil War in Lancashire" by B. G. Blackwood, "The social and political position of the early of Derby in later seventeenth-century Lancashire" by B. Coward and "The Lancashire militia, 1660-1688" by D. P. Carr.

## Sounder doctrine, brighter worship

Brian Martin

GEOFFREY ROWELL

*The Vision Glorious: Themes and Personalities of the Catholic Revival in Anglicanism*  
280pp. Oxford University Press. £15.  
019826443 7

Appropriately, the Chaplain of Keble College, Oxford, Geoffrey Rowell, has written *The Vision Glorious* to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Oxford Movement. It is a history of the influence of that Movement on the Church of England and demonstrates how much the modern Church owes to the quiet revolution brought about by the original Tractarian fathers, John Keble, John Henry Newman and E. B. Pusey. Dr Rowell's account of the last century and a half is thoughtful, shrewd and timely, and provides a needed history of the Catholic revival which began in public protest, proceeded with studied reserve and became ostentatious with those dubbed "ritualists" — such as the Anglo-Catholic priests Arthur Tooth and S. F. Green who, rather than submit to the censure of Lord Penzance's court created by the Public Worship Regulation Act, 1874, were prepared to go to prison.

It is a valuable book, the force and importance of which is hardly diminished by a few minor defects. John Keble, as Professor of Poetry at Oxford, is said to have held the Chair "for four years": in fact, he occupied it from 1832 to 1841. Then it is implied that Keble and Newman, as "clerical dons", were remote from worldly problems; but they were both for a time working curates who experienced ordinary, everyday troubles. Keble at Fairford, Newman in St Clement's, Oxford. Newman's parish when he was Vicar of St Mary's was not the university but the city; his parishioners were work-people, not dons. The urban poor were always with him. And Rowell gives great credence to enthusiastic reports of Newman's preaching by nineteenth-century eulogists, whereas some of his audience found him long-winded and monotonous. Lastly, as Roy Campbell wrote in a different context, "The editor, the editor's to blame", who is guilty of allowing an ugly modernism to creep into an otherwise elegant text, when Rowell comments that the end of liberalism on the corporate character of Christianity was "a privatization" of religion; his, too, must be the responsibility for omitting from the index the names Pollen and Doane, about whom it is valuable to know more.

All this aside, Rowell demonstrates Keble's fundamental belief that "Christ's Holy Christ-

ian Church is a real outward visible body, having supernatural grace continually communicated through it by succession from the Apostles, in whose place the bishops are". In the eyes of the Tractarians, Anglicanism should represent a theology "Catholic but not Roman". By scholarship, especially by the study of the Early Church Fathers, the Catholic revival recalled Anglicanism "to its roots in Scripture and Tradition". Keble, Newman and Pusey, the first generation of the Oxford Movement, adopted a stance of quiet confidence after initial outrage over "The Church Temporalities (Ireland) Bill" which threatened to suppress ten Irish sees. They embraced the doctrine of reserve. As Isaac Williams, author of *Tract 87*, wrote,

the platform is not our strength, nay, even the pulpit is not our strength; in these we must yield to others if they wish it; but our chief strength must be the altar; it must be in sacraments and prayers, and a good life to give efficacy to them.

Their immediate successors differed, in emphasizing outward and visible aids to devotion, contemplation and worship. In contrast to Keble's dull church at Hursley, J. M. Neale, a founder of the Cambridge Camden Society, stated, "A Church is not as it should be, till every window is filled with stained glass, till every inch of floor is covered with encaustic tiles", its roof-screen, roof and walls painted and frescoed. The exotic interior of Butterfield's Keble College chapel, as its chaplain must appreciate, would have delighted Neale: Keble, not so much — it lacks reserve. Neale translated Latin hymns (one by St Theodulph of Orleans, "All glory, laud and honour") and, as Rowell rightly observes, wanted "the Church of England to lay claim to the whole Catholic heritage that was rightfully hers".

The ritualism of the Anglo-Catholic slum priests was quite alien to the reserve of the Tractarians. Of the former, particularly C. F. Lowder, A. H. Mackonochie and G. R. Prynne declared the importance of elaborate vestments and ceremony. J. E. Vaux announced that the Church "should not shy

away from colourful services or dramatic preaching through fear of sensationalism". And although Archbishop Tait regarded the Revd Bryan King's use of vestments as "childish mimicry of antiquated garments", in Portsmouth the Revd R. W. Dolling maintained that the "frigid simplicity" of, in Rowell's words, "the unadorned Prayer Book services would never have converting power in the slum". While the early Tractarians appealed to mind and intellect, the ritualists appealed, too, to the imagination. As even Bishop Edward King wrote, "I am not a Ritualist, as you know; but, where the doctrine is sound, I rejoice that our simpler (and, I believe, often better and holier) brethren may have the help which sound and sight may be to devotion."

Rowell studies the Church of England not only at home but also abroad, and has written an important chapter on Missionary bishops who took the effects of the Catholic revival overseas. Their influence has helped to add authority and momentum to the modern ecumenical movement. Rowell's judgment is correct: "it was the Catholic vision of a reunited, episcopally ordered, sacramentally centred Church, international in character, but to which local churches would contribute their particular genius and outlook, which was the inspiration of ecumenical endeavour".

The modern Church of England has inherited a few problems from the Catholic revival which demand immediate practical attention: what use can be made of redundant, elaborately designed and decorated churches, typified by A. N. Wilson's St Aidan's, Purgatory, in his novel *Who was Oswald Fish?* But for the most part the legacy is advantageous to "true religion", ecumenism and the "vision glorious" of a unified Church of Christ. Geoffrey Rowell has charted critically the progress made towards this ideal by writing an admirable book which will engross Anglicans in general, and is necessary reading for church historians in particular.

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# The limits of pacifism

David Martin

**The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response: The U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on War and Peace in the Nuclear Age** 94pp. CTS/SPCK. £1.50.  
085183 540/0281 040858  
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**The Church and War: Papers Read at the Twenty-First Summer Meeting and the Twenty-Second Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society** 472pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £25.  
0631 134069

If anything is clear from the foundation documents of Christianity it is that Christian fraternity should transcend differences of class, race and nationality. Moreover, peace-making is blessed and war-making is not. So war presents a problem for the Christian conscience, one which has surfaced most persistently in those Nonconformist denominations which have separated themselves from the state.

More strictly sectarian groups, like the Waldensians, the Unitas Fratrum, the Mennonites and the Quakers have adopted pacifism as a way of life, though they have not all maintained that position in every phase of existence. These bodies, like the early Christian Church, have often emerged from the crucible of radical eschatology, and in their beginnings have expected a transformation of the world order. They have maintained their radical egalitarianism and simplicity within the protective capsule of sectarian exclusiveness. From that capsule has gradually emerged an extraordinary catalogue of social change, including many of the initial projects for progressive education, penal reform and communal experimentation.

The majoritarian Churches, especially those explicitly linked to the state, have accepted warfare, usually with some reservations as to its proper occasion and the means whereby it is waged. Once engaged in war, they have quite often identified their own tribe with Israel, attacking enemies as Canaanites or Amalekites, and have even blessed expansion as an adjunct of mission. Some wars have been converted into little less than the apocalyptic strife of the Lamb against the massed forces of Babylon the Great, represented by the tyranny of Rome or Russia, Napoleon or the Kaiser.

The state of literature on the peace issue now coming from Christian bodies in America, Britain, Holland, Belgium, France, Germany and Italy is unique. It shows the degree to which the Christian conscience is exercised by the moral problem of nuclear war, and perhaps reflects also the extent to which ecclesiastical elites in most countries have become separated from political elites.

The recent statement of the United States Catholic Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, shows how deeply Catholicism has absorbed the dominant Protestant culture in America. The statement itself is hard to interpret. It says over and over again that nuclear war is unacceptable, as if there were a body of opinion which disagreed. Then it sets out various criteria governing the possession of nuclear weapons: a) We need only the minimum required for deterrence; b) all increases must be in order to secure decreases; c) there must be no first use; and d) no targeting policy of such a kind that non-combatants might be killed "intentionally". So far as this last is concerned, such precision has never been possible in warfare, and since we know it is certainly not possible now, it seems to follow that Roman Catholics should leave all positions connected with United States defence, indeed, as one distinguished Roman Catholic correspondent commented in my hearing, "that make it a Protestant bomb".

The Bishops further say that their consciences are strained by the moral paradoxes contained in the notion of deterrence. But they do not attempt an answer. They dodge sideways by leaving the issue as a question: "May a nation threaten what it may never do?" The posing of this question is itself carefully (or perhaps carefully) ambiguous since "may never do" could mean "may never have to do" or "morally should never do". It so happens that this is the question on which the whole matter turns. To leave it hanging in the air, surrounded by repeated pieties, is a cop-out. Yet the Bishops declare themselves basically in favour of deterrence. They do so "for the time being", as if nuclear weapons were going some time to be eliminated. Then they add that since "ordinary" wars depend just as clearly on deterrence, then "conventional" weapons should be scaled down as well. They note, however, that "conceivably" a reduction in nuclear forces may mean that European nations in particular have to increase conventional armaments. This forces them to recognize, grudgingly and obliquely, that their hopes of a redirection of resources to solving problems of world poverty may be quite illusory. So they say they cannot deal with such "technical" questions, but wish to contribute a "moral dimension" as if that were a kind of special extra. Indeed, as they have formulated it, the "moral dimension" is not only extra but extraneous. Perhaps the political realism of their prescriptions is best indicated by the fact that they ask for a world government agency capable of enforcing its commands on every nation, and so constituted "as to pose no threat to any nation's sovereignty".

Yet there are some useful things in the document. Roman Catholic societies have rarely been sensitive to the rights of conscientious objectors, and the Bishops defend that right not only with regard to war in general, but in any particular war. They also have some pertinent words about not training personnel in a way which brutalizes them.

The collection of articles *The Cross and the Bomb*, edited by Francis Bridger, of the evangelical Anglican College of St John's, Nottingham, has a firmer grasp of realities and theology. What the volume shows is the role of theology in relation to pragmatic judgments in these debates. The contribution by Ulrich Simon sets out a very broad theological background, in the course of controverting, for example, the pacifist interpretation of the Cross. The paradigm of the suffering servant, he argues, shows us submission to God, not the enemy. The passion for peace in the Bible is matched by a militant desire for justice and righteousness. Moreover, all our choices involve appalling dangers. An unarmed Israel two generations ago barely survived physically; in this generation the secular militancy of Israel could threaten her spiritual identity and mission.

The other contributions also confuse what they believe to be erroneous understandings in theology, but the core of their political arguments stands alone without theological buttressing. The Bishop of London has useful things to say on non-violence which contrast with the vague gestures which the American Roman Catholic Bishops make towards non-violent techniques. He shows the limited range of conditions under which a non-violent approach might have some impact. Clearly it depends on the majority of the nation being willing to support it. In fact, few would adopt a non-violent approach, or engage in the disciplines it requires, and the leaders of such a movement would rapidly be eliminated by the occupying power.

Kath Ward argues from a chair of moral and social theology, but his subtle and intricate presentation of the moral elements in the nuclear debate, and of the relationship of love to power, does not depend necessarily on theological premises. The arguments put forward by Richard Harries are complementary to those of Professor Ward, and adumbrate a theology of power. This means that theology must incorporate experience of political realities, such as the universal operation of group interest, and a recognition of the fact that any policy, however peaceable in intent, will be imposed on the politician as "naked into the council chamber". Dr Bridger likewise contrasts the "Kingdom utopianism" of many theologians with the processes which govern international relations and which cannot be abrogated. Indeed, he shows (as does Sir Hugh Beach) that although the Bishop of Salisbury in *The Church and the Bomb* appears to reject nuclear arms on abstract moral and theological grounds, his position is basically consistent

with the position of the Bishop of Salisbury, and has to do with keeping just enough submarines to deter, or break log-jams and so on.

The hard core of this book is in the article by Sir Hugh Beach and in some sharp reasoning by a Roman Catholic layman, Michael Quinlan; and in both cases it is quite clear that the rather small theological component is dispensable. Sir Hugh's arguments about tactical and strategic, defensive and offensive, weapons, are technical and tight, so a summary which omits intermediate steps is apt to be misleading. He points out that the arguments of the Bishop of Salisbury's group who wrote *The Church and the Bomb* offer themselves for pragmatic test. Like the United States Roman Catholic Bishops, its authors seemed to take an absolutist stand about nuclear weapons, but then came up with quite limited suggestions concerned only with Britain's nuclear weaponry. The Revd Paul Oestreicher, one of the group, made these proposals depend on whether or not it contributed to destabilization. Destabilization is to be avoided at all costs, so Britain alone is to make the unilateralist gesture, not her European allies nor the USA. There is here no "will to universalize".

Such a gesture is to act as a smoke signal of goodwill emerging from the Western camp. It would involve Poland and Trident. Now the arguments for acquiring Trident, which is very much more expensive and effective than Polar, have to do with an insurance against the breakup of Nato, with the creation of a second centre of decision-making and with prestige and securing access to the top table. Beach is doubtful about these arguments, and holds that the cost of Trident must displace our conventional capability to some extent. So he believes that Britain's actual and potential capability, ie Polar and Trident, should be included in the overall negotiations and the highest price for the abandonment of Trident obtained in the context of bilateral negotiation. Had the report suggested this, he argues, rather than the theatrical gesture of unilateral renunciation, it could, indeed, have become a "unilateral stage within a multilateral process".

Beach then turns to the issues posed by Cruise and Pershing II. The slowness of Cruise makes clear that it is not a first-strike weapon, whereas Pershing II could be. Both have become linked together with the deployment of SS20s, and further have come to stand for the integrity and will of the Nato alliance. There is, of course, debate as to how far there is a qualitative escalation of the threat to Western Europe embodied in the SS20s, such as necessitates the deployment of Pershing II and Tomahawk Cruise missiles. But Sir Hugh concludes that to press on steadfastly with the Nato programme is both a token of Nato solidarity and the best chance, in the long run, of achieving successful talks. For the United Kingdom to withdraw would contribute to destabilization. The same would be true of withdrawal from Nato short-range systems, or from the Holy Loch agreement with the United States. A withdrawal from short-range systems, into which the British contribution is totally integrated, would logically imply we should "bring the boys home", and thus would contribute to instability. To abrogate the Holy Loch agreement would hardly encourage the United States to give more at the conference table. Such gestures would actually damage prospects in multilateral negotiations. We should take part in these in as hard-headed a way as possible in order to ensure the most far-reaching results compatible with prudence.

"This", says Sir Hugh, "will require reduction in Britain's nuclear stance - probably the abrogation of complete capabilities - but always in concert with allies as to principles as well as to timing and to consequentiality". In the thirty or so contributions to the remarkable overview provided by *The Church and War*, in the Studies in Church History series, it is possible to discern certain phases in the way Christians have articulated the issue of war. Clearly there is a contrast between the early Church, which was often pacifist, and the Christian empire. There is also a distinct change between the early and middle feudal periods - in which the Church put specific checks on conflict - and later feudalism, and there is the remarkable atmosphere generated by the crusades.

Then we have two crucial transitions, the advent of nationhood in which the Church is subordinate to the state in Roman Catholic and in Protestant societies alike, and the emergence of voluntary religious bodies which reject the state connection. The one tends to invoke Providential care for national fortunes, the other, while not immune to nationalistic doctrines of Providence, is capable of developing a pacific approach, short of strict pacifism. Nowadays it may be that the older Churches are adopting the pacific approach of the Non-conformist tradition.

In the modern period, strict pacifism has appeared outside the historic peace bodies. It lay along the margin of the nineteenth-century peace societies, and during the First World War made some small inroads into the traditional Protestant Churches. Much more recently a pacifist witness has been made - and accepted - in the Roman Catholic Church. One of the problems, as Martin Ceadel argues in his contribution, "Christian Pacifism", is that a strictly pacifist faith can engage in plausible but temporary alliances with other doctrines, such as, for example, the political radicalism of the 1930s. It shares a thought-world with ecological enthusiasms, utopian anarchism and those attitudes towards modernity which use the Bomb as a summary symbol of all that is destructive in science and industrial civilization. In the 1960s, one could discern a shadowy pacifism in liaison with revolts against all kinds of social discipline and notions of national solidarity.

The ideology of the Protestant nation-state still concerns us and rests firmly on the Old Testament. God's Englishman is in receipt of Providential care and occasional divine chastisement, and this is nicely charted in this volume by D. Naphine and W. A. Speck from 1660 to 1763, and by Françoise Denon-Brossard during the '45. If the seventeenth and eighteenth-century divines had preached their Jeremiahs and their sermons for national fasts and thanksgivings during the Falklands conflict, the British Government would have had no cause for complaint. God is for Protestantism and liberty, and against Catholicism and tyranny. *Mutatis mutandis*, the sentiments of a sermon preached in 1745 would have done very well: "Will you tamely resign our excellent constitution in Church and State . . . to a band of mountaineers, headed by a Papist?" Miraculous calms in the South Atlantic would have shown the care exercised by a Guardian Angel over our English Israel - though equally setbacks would be attributed to divine displeasure over the licence and infidelity rife in our English Sodom and Gomorrah.

The invention of the voluntary religious association made possible an intermittent critique of militant Protestant nationalism. It is in the 1790s that we see older loyalist and quietist attitudes among dissenters yielding somewhat to an admiration for the French Revolution, especially among those with a millerist theology. Once Britain was at war with France dissenters took various stands, some apocalyptic, a few almost pacifist, and most concerned with the destruction of war, the militarization of society and "thousands unnecessarily hurried into the eternal state".

Thereafter in the nineteenth century there was a complicated see-saw among dissenters between "Exeter Hall" attitudes, which deplored imperialism and militarism, and support for crusades defending liberty, justice and Christian morality. Certainly up to 1945 a pacifist approach had more appeal among dissenters than among Anglicans and Roman Catholics. At the moment we seem to be in a period of transition. The theological underpinnings of the Protestant nation-state are under some strain. Since the First World War it has seemed less and less plausible to see in the victories and defeats of war divine encouragements and warnings. All over Western Europe ecclesiastical elites have become distanced from the drives and the constraints - felt by political elites - The idea of *millies Christi* can be seen as a contradiction in terms. But the strict pacifist option, whether embraced by activist Lutheran cells in East Germany or small Roman Catholic groups in Hungary, or by some elements in the Western Christian protest against the Bomb, remains confined to a small minority without purchase on the policy of any government anywhere.

# With the playmates on the Oedipal playmat

Clive Sinclair

**PHILIP ROTH**  
**The Anatomy Lesson**  
219pp. Cape. £8.95.  
0234 029606

Nathan Zuckerman, recipient of the anatomy lesson, made his debut in *My Life as a Man* (Peter Tarnopol, that book's protagonist, having been his creator), some years before his appearance in *The Ghost Writer*. At the end of Tarnopol's first sketch, "Salad Days", Zuckerman is buoyant, but the author sees pain ahead for his precocious invention. "The story of Zuckerman's suffering calls for an approach far more serious than that which seems appropriate to the tale of his easeful salad days. To narrate with fidelity the misfortunes of Zuckerman's twenties would require deeper dredging, a darker sense of irony, a grave and pensive voice to replace the amused, Olympian point of view . . . or maybe what that story requires is neither gravity nor complexity, but just another author . . .". In fact, Tarnopol did have a shot at it in "Courtship Disaster", wherein his *alter ego* was tortured by inexplicable migraines, but it has taken a decade for that other author to come along with the necessary qualifications to turn *Zuckerman Agonistes* into a comedy.

Among other things, *The Anatomy Lesson* is a passionate defence of a career; Zuckerman's, not Roth's. The irony being that Zuckerman is unaware of his powerful advocacy. Of course Zuckerman's career has much in common with Roth's - his *Carnovsky* (which owes more to its meaty sound than I. J. Singer's family saga) being as infamous as Roth's incomparable best-seller - but they are by no means the same. Zuckerman has nothing like *When She Was Good* to his credit. He is, in a sense, the semite-obsessed writer Roth's Jewish detractors imagine him to be. If I were really as they say, Roth seems to be thinking, what kind of mess would I be in?

As Tarnopol is to Zuckerman 1, so Roth is to Zuckerman 2. His irony is certainly darker than Tarnopol's, though his comic timing is sharper. Zuckerman, while no sufferer *manqué*, is not over-endowed with dignity. Were he, God forbid, the cadaver in Rembrandt's similarly titled painting, the students would doubtless be laughing. Later relics of Zuckerman, author of a potent best-seller, would be auctioned off as aphrodisiacs. Roth's imagination, though in this book it doesn't run so far as it sometimes has, is Jacobean: cruel and unforgiving, in the post-Shakespearean manner, but also sly, self-protective, intellectual and Jewish, like the Jacob who outwitted Esau. Roth will wrestle with angels, but he'll also revenge himself upon critics who have wronged him. As for the latter, suffice it to say that Milton Appel's attack on Zuckerman bears more than a passing resemblance to living Howe's commentary on Roth. Thus the reception of one book becomes the subject of another.

I. B. Singer once said, "As a matter of fact in all my writing I tell the story of my life . . . Only the dilettantes try to be universal; a real writer knows that he's connected with a certain people, a certain time, a certain environment, and there he stays. There he stays put, I would say, and he doesn't mind it because there is enough to investigate and to learn even from a small world." Singer, in the perverse way that one man's poison is another man's story, has benefited from having lived through more interesting times than Roth: To have survived Watergate (Nixon, thinks Zuckerman, is the only one in as much trouble as himself, the year being 1973) does not mean much, morally speaking. Singer's own biography, however, illuminates his main preoccupation: the conflict between the pull of his imagination and the course of Jewish history, the requirements of the first being constantly undermined by the tragic nature of the second. This is personalized into a dispute between rabbi-father and writer son, the traditionalist against the enlightened one. The very enlightenment, Singer now believes, that led inevitably to the Holocaust. In espousing it he was therefore, albeit unconsciously, guilty of patriocide.

In America philosophies are harmless but words can kill, according to Henry Zuckerman, who accuses his older brother of accelerating their father's death - *Carnovsky* being the murder weapon. Certainly Zuckerman is unable to forget his father's last word, which sounded like "bastard". Thus Zuckerman Snr's demise, which should have let his son off the parental hook, was actually (despite the title of the book, *Zuckerman Unbound*, in which it was described) his binding. The ropes are invisible, but they hurt none the less. In *The Ghost Writer* Zuckerman imagined introducing Anne Frank to his astounded parents as his prospective bride; in *The Anatomy Lesson*, no less crazily, he decides to become a doctor. At the end of *God's Grace* Bernard Malamud reversed the Abraham-Isaac relationship and had the monkey-son burn the teacher-father, a representative sacrifice on behalf of all those other followers of the Father who were murdered by disciples of the Son. Biblical imagery, no less than that of the Holocaust, informs Jewish-American writing. With Singer the hyphenated bridge between those two adjectives is no real problem. Though a long-time resident of Eighty-Sixth Street, he writes about the ghettos and *shetlach* of Poland, and his dead family, without need of ironic distance, for only luck (and an older brother) saved him. Being a Jewish writer Roth shares the same bag of images, the difference being that when Zuckerman sees jackboots as threatening it is a symptom of paranoia rather than the world's murderous intent. Bathos, not tragedy, is Zuckerman's lot.

The world is out of joint, as is Zuckerman. This erstwhile prince of letters may now be king but, like Oedipus, he doesn't much enjoy it. Having bumped off his father (perhaps), he doesn't get into his mother's bed until after her death. Not only is Zuckerman now physically incapable of writing, being incapacitated by a pain that branches down from his neck like an upturned menorah (suggesting an excommunicant); he is also without inspiration. "Without a father and a mother and a homeland, he was no longer a novelist. No longer a son, no longer a writer. Everything that galvanized him had been extinguished, leaving nothing unmistakably his and nobody else's to claim, exploit, enlarge, and reconstruct." Why the problem? Singer has no trouble reconstructing Warsaw. But that resurrection is a triumph of memory over forgetting, and if not necessarily courageous is at least part-political; whereas the rebuilding of Newark could only be sentimental regression.

Not that Zuckerman doesn't have well-documented infantile tendencies, occasioned in *The Anatomy Lesson* by the onset of pain. "When he is sick", the book begins, "every man wants his mother." To ease his aches Zuckerman purchases a playmat in a children's furniture store upon which he reclines, sometimes with one of four replacement mothers, who take care of his sexual needs by lowering their various orifices upon his supine body. Consequently he would seem a sucker for the panacea offered by Dr Kotler. This suggestively named medic offers to cure Zuckerman for free out of gratitude for *Carnovsky*, which he reads, not as pornographic handbook, but as a guide to the Newark that was. All Zuckerman has to do is sleep upon his patented pillow. In effect, Zuckerman is being offered the opportunity to lose himself in the mock-intimacy of collective nostalgia. A more persuasive voice is that of Jaga, one of his playmates, who appeals, not to his home-town instincts, but to his out-of-town ambitions to be a writer of significance. For Jaga, assistant to his trichologist (Zuckerman is losing his hair in addition to everything else), is Polish, Roth, having edited that awe-inspiring series "Writers from the Other Europe" for American Penguin, knows better than anybody what marvellous literature such misfortunes can inspire, but he also knows that it is *their* material. Speaking of *Writing on the Wall*, an anthology of recent Czech literature collected by Tony Liehm, Roth has said: "There's nothing you know that they don't know, and there's no way of doing it they haven't thought of, from the most surreal to the most realistic. So, the thing is, how the hell do you use it?" Zuckerman, entraptured by one of Jaga's monologues, delivered during love-making, transcribes it from memory im-

mediately thereafter. Excited, he even considers making her the subject of his next book, provisionally entitled *The Sorrows of Jaga*. Some hopes!

Hopeless - and not only because of the grass and the vodka. If you get out of yourself you can't be a writer because the personal ingredient is what gets you going, and if you hang onto the personal ingredient any longer you'll disappear right up your asshole. Dante got out of hell easier than you'll escape Zuckerman-Carnovsky. You don't want to represent her Warsaw - it's what her Warsaw represents that you want: suffering that isn't semi-comical, the world of massive historical pain instead of this pain in the neck. War, destruction, anti-Semitism, totalitarianism, literature on which the fate of a culture hinges, writing at the very heart of the upheaval, a martyrdom more to the point - some point, any point - than hearing the cocktail-party chit-chat as a guest on Dick Cavett. Chained to self-consciousness. Chained to retrospection. Chained to my dwarf drama till I die."

Zuckerman unbound, indeed. Even so, Zuckerman is no solipsist, he knows that there is life outside. Hence he rejects the offer of Jenny, another of the quartet, to share her woodland sanctuary (thereby holding off Lonoff's hermetic fate, as detailed in *The Ghost Writer*). Yes, everyone from Milton Appel to his brother knows what is best for him; Herzog had his Reality Instructors. Zuckerman has his prescribers. Diana, youngest of his mistresses, cannot understand why he should have been so pricked by his father's opposition and Appel's strictures. She does not realize that the arguments are historical as much as personal. A subtle balance, underlined by his mother's last word, which happens to be "holocaust". Dying, she scribbles the word on a scrap of paper which her son (*pace* Appel) can't bring himself to throw away, though he doesn't know what to do with it either - neatly summing up Roth's own attitude to the Jewish tradition, encapsulated latterly by that word. His mother, on her death bed, thinks of the six million. Zuckerman, in pain, thinks only of himself. He decides to become a doctor.

He flies to Chicago intending to be the Jewish Schweitzer, incidentally relinquishing the painful burden of self, but once there, finds himself impersonating a pornographer - whom he names after his critic, Appel. This, of course, is the nub of the book. The drugs and drink with which he tries to suppress his pain only succeed in releasing his inner self. In Milton Appel, pornographer, Zuckerman creates his most successful literary impersonation for years, taking in all he meets. Like it or not, his great talent consists of being able to dream up moral outlaws, Jewish heroes of the future, genuine Jacobean wits who call brothels Adult Day Care Centers. The novel's comic pace accelerates as Zuckerman, swinging from one moral extreme to the other, heads for his inevitable comedown. It occurs in a Chicago graveyard where he attacks his friend's father (defending the latter's worthless adopted grandson) only to have his "filthy" mouth shattered by a dead Jew's headstone. Later the uninjured party, on learning that Zuckerman is an orphan, forgives him.

In hospital and on the mend, Zuckerman, growing a white beard, considers himself reborn as a father-figure. But there is no escaping his future as a man apart, or from the "corpus that was his". Kafka and Beckett, saints of brevity, are in this book's pedigree, as is the somewhat more loquacious Bellow. It is surprising, then, that Herzog ends in silence, whereas *The Anatomy Lesson* anticipates more from Zuckerman. Like Herzog, Zuckerman has resisted all blandishments to join the group (excepting, he thinks, doctors) whilst never rejecting the world, of which however there could have been more: I'll be a painful obsession with self gives the book its manic energy, but its speed sometimes causes characters to disappear at an alarming rate. During *My Life as a Man*, one of Tarnopol's readers asks: "Are you planning to continue to write Zuckerman variations until you have constructed a kind of full-length fictional fugue?" A fugue, you'll recall, requires more than one voice. I would be sorry to see the last of Zuckerman, but I also wouldn't mind hearing a few more sustained harmonies, even if they are dominated by Zuckerman's authentic (if disreputable) voice. I look forward to Zuckerman's next novel.

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# The Korzeniowskis' boy

**Redmond O'Hanlon**

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Translated by Halina Carroll-Najder  
647pp. Cambridge University Press. £19.50.  
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0521 242169

Conrad has now been well served by his biographers. After a poor start with G. Jean-Aubry's two-volume *Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters*, 1927 (at best inaccurate, at worst a tampering with the text) and his *The Sea-Dreamer, A Definitive Biography of Joseph Conrad* 1957 (just as bad), we now have Jocelyn Baines's *Joseph Conrad, A Critical Biography*, 1960 (good, short, straightforward); Bernard C. Meyer's *Joseph Conrad, A Psychoanalytic Biography*, 1967 (great fun to read and, besides, it contains reproductions of some of Conrad's erotic drawings); Norman Sherry's *Conrad's Eastern World*, 1966 and *Conrad's Western World*, 1971 (invaluable facts, naive interpretation); Frederick R. Karl's *Joseph Conrad, The Three Lives*, 1979 (long, full of factual good sense and stratum-cumulus cloudiness in about equal proportions); the first volume of Ian Watt's critical-biographical study *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*, 1980 (good on contemporary history).

laboured in criticism); and, joining Zdzisław Najder's own edition (to which every biographer since Baines – who saw Najder's early research – has been indebted for his Polish material), *Conrad's Polish Background: Letters to and from Polish Friends, 1964*, here now are *Joseph Conrad, a Chronicle*, and a biographical spin-off of Polish documents, *Conrad under Familial Eyes*.

With such a wealth of material published before he brought his own book to press, it is understandable that Najder should sound defensive in his introduction. He wants us to know that he began work in 1957 and finished twenty years later, or, more importantly, two years before Karl's biography was published. A little querulously, he tells us "Though I cooperated with Professor Karl for several years on the edition of Conrad's letters, I was completely unaware that he was engaged on a large-scale biography."

Still, the two works are very different. Najder suffers, by comparison, only because of a deficiency he dismisingly admits he is aware of: when "reading the best, classical 'lives' I was always conscious that I could not, as they did, render the 'atmosphere of the time', re-construct the hero's physical environment, or re-create the mood of his relationships with other people. My mind, long ago programmed by logical empiricists, is too angular for that. I haven't even tried." But this is not quite as dire as it sounds. Najder's book may be flat, but it is not dull or stale or unprofitable. He is the only authoritative instructor we have in the ways of Conrad's Polishness and Polishisms. And Conrad's rich and terrible Polish background is vital to an understanding of the man and his work.

In 1795, the republican kingdom of Poland (its Kings had been elected) and their power confined by the Polish parliament or *Sejm* whose members were drawn from the *szlachta*, a brotherhood-cum-class of nobility-cum-gentry) was divided into three and occupied by Prussia, Austria and Russia. From that moment, as Nalder tells us, an almost unbroken tradition of patriotic conspiracies began. Conrad's grandfather, Teodor Korzeniowski, for instance, a landowner, fought against the Austrians in the army of the Duchy of Warsaw at the battle of Raszyn and, in the 1830 insurrection against Russia, formed his own cavalry squadron, was promoted to Colonel and given a medal for bravery by his fellow Poles. He then, for his pains, had his estate confiscated by the Russians. Teodor settled down to be some estate manager but remained always

teacher, in the afternoons walked the streets in sorrow . . . To be able to do nothing for [his father] made him frantic. He had done nothing for him all his life.

The persuasiveness, the living quality of the story, stems from the ability of the narrative to slip in and out of different language registers. The first three words, in typical Malamud fashion, seem merely descriptive, short-story shorthand, but in fact state the central theme of the story: father implies son. The next sentences beautifully capture the interested but uninvolved world of the doctors, the old man's jokey bitterness. Is this directed at the doctors? At his illness? The mysterious answer, "It wouldn't be impossible", may hold a clue. At the moment we cannot say who speaks it, a doctor, the old man himself, the son, God . . . The story will help resolve this by introducing the son, now locked in his own despair, despair at what is happening to his father and at the waste of their two lives together. Anxious to do anything to save his father he finds himself paying out almost a thousand dollars to a *louche* rabbi who claims to be able to make silver crowns that will save men's lives. But as soon as Gans has handed over the money and left he has cold feet. The man is obviously a charlatan. Why did I do it? At least if I'd ordered the \$401 crown instead of the \$986 one! He rushes back, asks to see the crown, and, when the rabbi stalls, threatens him with the law. "Is this the way to talk to a rabbi of God?" "A thief is a thief", retorts Gans. "Don't spoil now the miracle", admonishes the old man, but Gans won't be stopped: "Miracle! It's a freaking fake magic, with an idiot girl for come-on and hypnotic mirrors. I was mesmerized, suckered by you."

'Be kind,' begged the rabbi, tottering as he wandered amid empty chairs. 'Be merciful to an old man. Think of my poor child. Think of your father who loves you.'

'He hates me, the son of a bitch, I hope he crows.' In an explosion of silence the girl slobbered in fright.

'Aha,' cried the wild-eyed rabbi, pointing a finger at God in heaven. 'Murderer,' he cried, agast.

Moaning, father and daughter rushed into each other's arms, as Albert, wearing a massive spikoladen headache, rushed down the booming stairs.

An hour later the older Gans shut his eyes and expired.

The headache is a marvellous touch. But is Malamud urging us to have faith? Of course not. The important point, again, is not whether the rabbi is a charlatan or not, but how the pressure of events leads Gans to utter a truth

## the dialogue

had always kept from himself. Yet even to that it like that is to do a disservice to the story. I hope he croaks" may be Gans's deep desire, but Malamud knows, and shows, that deep desire may have deeper, that the terrible exclamation "I may itself be hiding further, infinite layers of pain, remorse, even love. As in the Bible, it is through speech that we come to know character, but knowing here means becoming aware of men's unfathomable depths.

The stories are themselves magic crowns, of course. The space of narrative is the space of imagination, so it can include talking horses and Jewish birds, and even a black Jewish angel. It is not a question of deciding whether these are "real" or not, so much as of what the invention of such creatures allows us to learn about the interplay of imagination and self-deception in our lives. In his introduction Malamud seems to see himself not as the won't-work rabbi, but as a combination of the rabbi and a contented Leo Finkle. Magic, parrot or magic crown, it's all one. The important thing is to use the imagination to uncover truths, not self-deception. There is nothing mysterious in such a process, as Malamud points out in his introduction. You start to talk to yourself and before you know where you are, the story is crying out to be fashioned: you are in the service of a master other than the ego. "And if a man in a horse or a horse that talks like a man?" asks Abramowitz. When he begs to be set free his owner, a deaf-mute circus artist, merely beats him on the nose for his pains. A moment the climax Abramowitz and his owner struggle desperately together, the horse's head comes off and a man's head and torso appears. The owner falls back and Abramowitz is alone. "Departing the circus grounds he entered across a grassy soft field into a dark wood, free centaur."

Centaur is the nearest to wholeness, unified with ourselves that we'll get to, and if one of our double condition we make sure our dialogues with ourselves as these stories, we shouldn't grumble too much. I haven't mentioned Malamud's wonderful ability to mix black speech and Italian speech, as well as Yiddish English, or talked about the best story in the book, "My Son the Murderer," where there is no magic and where even the absence of inverted commas plays an active role. But one can't deal with everything. All these stories grow in stature the more often they are read. Malamud is seventy this year, and his appearance of this volume is cause for public celebration.

Still, the two works are very different. Najder suffers, by comparison, only because of a deficiency he disarmingly admits he is aware of: when "reading the best, classical 'lives' I was always conscious that I could not, as they did, render the 'atmosphere of the time', re-construct the hero's physical environment, or re-create the mood of his relationships with other people. My mind, long ago programmed

by logical empiricists, is too angular for that. I haven't even tried." But this is not quite as dire as it sounds. Najder's book may be bad, but it is not dull or stale or unprofitable. He is the only authoritative instructor we have in the ways of Conrad's Polishness and Polishisms. And Conrad's rich and terrible Polish background is vital to an understanding of the man and his work.

After six months in prison, where he suffered from rheumatism and scurvy, Apollon Bwa and Conrad were sent into exile (the Russian court records are reproduced in *Conrad under Familial Eyes*). "What is Volodga?" he writes to Bwa's cousins, the Zagorskis. "A Christian is not required to know. Volodga [200 miles north of Moscow] is a huge quagmire stretching over three verssts; cut up with parallel and intersecting lines of wooden footbridges, all rotten and shaky under one's feet: this is the only means of communication for the local people." Their hut was difficult to keep warm and dry; "even when the stoves are red-hot, after several days of frost a white mist appears in the corners of the warmest rooms." Bwa's health began to deteriorate. In February, 1865 Anolli writes to a friend:

first, misleadingly seductive view of the sea from the Lido in Venice.

Two years later, in 1874, Bobrowski gave in, and Conrad set off for Marseille with plenty of books and clothes, ample money, and an introduction to a Pole who sailed on French ships. Conrad quickly got to know the ship pilots in the port, who taught him to sail. He also discovered that Marseille was a centre of trade and smuggling, good cafés and nightlife. He began to spend money, fast.

He took a passage on the Mont Blanc to Martinique; made short voyages to Le Havre and back with a cargo of logwood; and, in July 1876, signed on as steward on the *barque* Saint Antoine to Martinique, to Cartagena in Colombia, and Puerto Cabello and La Guaira in Venezuela (where his several days on land provided the only direct memories he would later have for the writing of *Nostromo*). Like episodes in his autobiographical stories (as Najder plainly shows with some fine detective work throughout the biography) gun-running for the Carlists, it appears, would have been impossible at the time.

His allowance from his uncle was 2,000 francs a year (the pay of a lieutenant in the French Navy; the average industrial worker in France made 800-900 francs a year), but his demands were always double his supply. In the autumn of 1877 he received an additional 2,000 francs from a relative, Katarzyna Korzeniowska-Ki; and lost it all by investing in a smuggling operation which failed. At about the same time it transpired that as a Russian subject he was forbidden to serve on French vessels without permission from the Russian consul (and as he was liable for military service in Russia, there was no question of his asking for that permission). He tried to join an American squadron anchored at Villefranche and was rejected. So he borrowed 800 francs from his friend Richard Fecht and set off for Monte Carlo, where he gambled and lost.

Conrad retired to his room in a small pension near the Opera at 18, Rue Sainte, having invited Fecht to tea. He placed his address book beside him, and, just before his guest was due to arrive, shot himself through the chest with his revolver.

Fecht sent a telegram to Bobrowski, "Conrad blessé envoyez argent - arrivez." The bullet had gone "durch und durch [through and through] near his heart without damaging any vital organ" and Conrad was already on the way to recovery. Bobrowski set about repairing the rest of the damage; he told everyone that Conrad had been wounded in a duel, paid off his debts (for 6,000 francs), raised Conrad's allowance to 2,400 francs a year and then he settled down for a fortnight to research the character of his charge:

My study of the individual has convinced me that he is not a bad boy, only one who is extremely sensitive, concealed, reserved, and in addition excitable. . . . In his ideas and discussions he is ardent and original. We Poles, particularly when young, have an innate liking for the French and for the Republic — he, however, does not like them at all and is an Imperialist. . . . Finally, it was decided that he should join the English Merchant Marine where there are no such formalities as in France.

In April, 1878 Conrad - now twenty -

Tadeusz aloud to me and made me read it aloud. Not just once or twice. I used to prefer *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo to *Konrad Wallenrod*, *Grzywna*. Later I preferred *Wojna i pokój* by Leo Tolstoy to *Wojna i pokój* by Henryk Słowacki. You know why Słowacki? Il est l'âme de toute la Pologne, lui." Burrowing into books, certainly, was a habit which Conrad was never to lose: he read vastly in French and English literature, in travel books and in contemporary sciences during his sea life and his writing career, and, even in his later years when his creative gifts had abandoned him, he

still read like a young man. On his 1914 visit to Poland, a cousin of his remembers in *Conrad under Familial Eyes*, "During his two-month stay he devoured almost all that was worth reading in fiction and drama. 'Devoured' is the right word, for he read with unusual, unbelievable speed. I was constantly bringing him new books; he used to get impatient when on his finishing one, there was not another at hand."

A year after Ewa's death, Apollo sent Conrad away for the summer to his grandmother, Teofila Bobrowska, in Nowoczwastów near Kiev (Najder supplies plenty of maps). And this is the first we hear of Conrad's recurrent illnesses, probably psychosomatic epileptic attacks, which lasted into his teenage years. In 1867, the broken Apollo was released from exile and made plans to become an editor on the new democratic newspaper *Kraj*, which was to be launched in Cracow. He put in a few last months of perfunctory work on its section for Russian and English affairs before tuberculosis killed him in his forty-eighth year, on May 23, 1869.

His funeral became a patriotic demonstration: "Huge crowds surged along the Grodzka and Poselska streets to pay their last respects to the prematurely departed poet and Poland's noble son. The clergy, trade guilds with their banners, students and gymnasium pupils, and representatives of educational societies and of the voluntary fire brigade surrounded the coffin; several thousand people followed in silence." And the week-end after his death



Marseille and, as an unofficial apprentice, sailed by way of Malta, Constantinople, Kerch and Yeyak on the Sea of Azov, to Lowestoft, where, on June 10, he set foot on an English quay for the first time. It was a gentle beginning. To mark the proper seriousness of the occasion, Conrad went straight to London and spent half of his remaining money in an impressively small number of days. He then wrote to his uncle, "send me 500 fr. which you can deduct from the allowance", returned to Lowestoft, and took ship before Bobrowski's justly wrathful letter (and the money) could arrive. He joined a small, family-run coastal schooner, *The Skimmer of the Sea*. "I can never forget", he said towards the end of his life, "the friendliness of the Lowestoft people to a strange youngster. They may have been amused at me but they taught many of a seaman's duties and the very terms of our sea-speech."

Amidst a maze of other and intervening plans which never led anywhere, Conrad then embarked on his career at sea. Najder follows the familiar story of Conrad's gradual rise to a command with thoroughness and some verve—the hard but exciting life on the wool-clippers; the monotony of steamships; the careful trade routes round the Malay Archipelago; the captaincy of the *Otago*. He points out firmly, with a rap on the knuckles for Norman Sherry, that "Conrad used the names of people met at that time, and occasionally their external appearance, in his writings only as fulcra for raising his new fictional world from the vast magma of reminiscences, the books he had read, and his

own imagination. . . . Books by travellers and diarists played a more significant role as a source of raw material for fiction." This rule, Najder insists, applies just as strongly to Conrad's months in Africa as it does to his time in Borneo.

And he takes a newly brutal line on Conrad's marriage to Jessie George. Ford Madox Ford's satirical novel *The Simple Life Limited*, Najder tells us, presents one possible explanation. Conrad *alias* Simeon Brandetski, "possibly Polish, possibly Lithuanian, possibly Little Russian Jew", settles in England after a life of travel and work in Africa which has ruined his health. On the advice of Mr Parmont (Garnett), as Najder summarizes things,

He changes his name to Simon Brandon and becomes a writer. A hopeless floundering who does not even bother to sit up straight, he hires a secretary to type for him. Since he is a late riser, their work drags on well into the night. The secretary becomes his mistress—and Brandetski-Brandon is forced to marry her.

(Najder does not like Jessie, and his account should be balanced against Meyer's lively and sympathetic appreciation.) Anyhow, Najder cannot understand

what a sensitive and cultured Pole of aristocratic manners and "gentle birth" saw in a typical of humble origin, one of the many children of a warehouseman and shop-keeper, a girl almost sixteen years younger . . . not well educated or particularly intelligent, or—by Conrad's own account—especially attractive (but then how well she cooked for him, and how faithfully she looked after him and their two sons, and how she put up with his moods and mannerisms, nobody knows).

The rest of Conrad's life is again well known and documented: the indifferent but well reviewed Malayan novels; the sudden and miraculous genius of *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (1897); the great series of major works and the subsequent nervous collapse and artistic decline (with only *The Shadow Line*, 1917, remotely comparable to his own best work) that just happened to coincide with the popular success of *Chance* in 1913, which solved his money worries. Najder documents it as well as Conrad's previous biographers (if a little less dramatically) and he is especially good on Conrad's feelings about Poland and on the particular significance of each of Conrad's various Polish visitors.

He is fascinating, too, on Conrad's miseries and terrors and prostrations. He illustrates all the following symptoms of depression from the letters and from contemporary descriptions of Conrad (and, indeed, they are all to be found in Volume One of the *Collected Letters*):

Sadness; a feeling of incapacity; fatigue; heaviness of limbs; anxiety coupled with listlessness; aversion to any mental or physical activity; continuous self-reproach; thoughts of guilt and punishment; inability to concentrate, sometimes to the extent of stupor; a slowing down of the capacity for work, especially when it is beyond the ordinary routine; frequent and exaggerated symptoms of physical ailments, particularly of the digestive tract; sense of loneliness; fear of madness and of the disintegration of personality (manifesting itself in the vagueness of one's vision of oneself); suicidal tendencies; seeing the bad side of everything; delusions of calamity and disaster; shrinkage of psychological space; loss of vivid imagination; seeing his world in grey and dark colours, and feeling it is unreal and chaotic. Throughout,

however, the consciousness remains lucid, and the memory and intelligence are unimpaired.

But this vision of Conrad's dark periods must be balanced with two facts: first, in spite of everything, he produced several of the greatest novels in the English language; and second, in spite of everything, he entertained his friends every weekend.

Conrad's parties in the various houses which he rented at different times around Kent would include Garnett or Galsworthy or Cunningham-Graham or Ford Madox Ford or Bennett or Wells or Gissing or Stephen Crane (later) or W. H. Hudson or Norman Douglas or André Gide or a host of less well known friends. Many of his letters to some of them can be found in the *Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Volume 1, 1861-1897*, which is the start of an eight-volume project, a chronological rearrangement and scholarly checking of the letters previously dispersed in volumes such as Jean-Aubry's; Edward Garnett's edition, *Letters from Joseph Conrad, 1895-1924* (1928); John A. Gee and Paul J. Stum's *Letters of Joseph Conrad to Marguerite Poradowska, 1890-1920*; William Blackburn's *Joseph Conrad: Letters to William Blackwood and David S. Meldrum* (1958); and C. T. Watts's *Joseph Conrad's Letters to R. B. Cunningham-Graham* (1969), with an addition of 1,500 letters as yet unpublished. Frederick R. Karl's and Laurence Davies's notational apparatus is exemplary, and any doubts aroused by Davies's belief, cited in his introduction, that the Gould concession in *Nostromo* is a gold-mine, are not justified.

## Oddly melodious

Hugh Macdonald

JULIAN RUSHTON  
*The Musical Language of Berlioz*  
303pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.  
0521 24279 7

A common refrain in Berlioz criticism has been to observe the strangeness of his music when compared to the norms of (principally) German music on which most of us are brought up. Berlioz himself, of course, never regarded his own music as odd, and it seems desirable that the modern listener should get within the frontiers of his art and hear it on its own terms, not as a distorted version of something else. That ideal is still perhaps too much to hope for, in which case the close scrutiny of his musical language to see what if anything is odd about it and, if so, how it should be approached, is an essential requirement of musical literature. This is the burden that Julian Rushton has taken upon himself, and a noble task it is, since he is addressing those who have been intrigued on their first encounter with Berlioz and listen again since they "believe in the possibility of being convinced". He takes his readers to be not dyed-in-the-wool Berliozians who love the music and need no analysis to discover why, but educated musicians who know their Bach and Beethoven and who are undismayed by and may even be convinced by harmonic and structural analysis.

Few persons could be better equipped to tackle this. In the first place he knows all the music intimately. Second, he is more familiar

than many could hope or wish to be with the daily increasing corpus of Berlioz criticism and has patiently absorbed the writings of the perverse and the wrong-headed as well as of the sane and the civilized. References to existing criticism are handled with immense skill. Third, he hears and reads the music the way it is and not the way he would wish it to be. And fourth, the book is informed by the plainest common sense and a complete absence of jargon at points where musicologists (and especially analysts) are more than ever prone to drown what is obvious to the merest child in oceans of circumlocution and obfuscation. Not that the text is not dense, indeed it becomes more and more heavy-going as it proceeds; but one emerges from a whole chapter devoted to a note-by-note analysis of the Overture to *Benvenuto Cellini* and another to the role of Faust in *La Damnation de Faust* into a conclusion which offers a highly intelligent and lucid assessment of Berlioz's standing in a historical perspective, full of brave and telling insights.

One hopes readers will not fall by the wayside before they reach this sunny clearing. One of the difficulties inherent in analytical writing is that it is only understood by the musically literate, who by definition are less in need of such help than others. Thorough examination of every note in a score is inevitably the only way to study a work properly, but the conclusions are invariably the same as those with which one started out. Rushton digs endless pits for himself, with many tables extracting parametric readings (superbly printed) and the inevitable Schenkerian diagrams, but steps

defly across them by telling us what he knew all along, namely that Berlioz does not do what Bach or Mendelssohn would have done, though of course occasionally, indeed often, he does. The real intuitive processes in Berlioz's mind remain remote, and presumably they always will if such comprehensive treatment as this does not uncover them.

The musical analyst can observe but he is impotent to explain or to judge. Rushton generally recognizes this and refrains from drawing rash conclusions. He does claim that analysis of whole melodies "shows . . . the mastery and diversity of Berlioz's melody", a territory hideously scarred with old battles between those who deny and those who affirm Berlioz's gift of melody. Analysis is a peculiarly blunt instrument in this contest. In the field of harmony Rushton bravely attempts what Berlioz's admirers have always declared to be wicked: he suggests alternative harmonizations using the traditional tonal (German) procedures, not to rap Berlioz over the knuckles but to show how far he is from these norms. In 1928 Ernest Newman said, in defence of Berlioz's harmony: "Professors used to concoct 'bad' harmonic sequences and show how they could be converted into 'good' ones". So it is happening still, but done now with the opposite purpose, to show how Berlioz's thinking may be grasped by reference to familiar norms, a risky undertaking indeed when some will inevitably prefer the norms, and when the comparison would have been entirely meaningless to Berlioz himself.

On the aesthetic level, too, there are difficulties, since it is easy to make fun, as Rushton

does, of Berlioz's contrapuntal incompetence in a student exercise, less easy to be harsh on similar vagaries in mature music when an unprejudiced judgment would surely have to carry the argument to that more sensitive stage. Berlioz's technique is so elusive that it disarms both admiration and criticism, and it remains mysterious even after the patient attention of these pages. Rushton reserves his strictures for the dramatically inappropriate rather than the structurally unbalanced or technically weak. He is impatient with those characteristically French divertissements that hold up the action in dramatic works—the "Marche hongroise" in *La Damnation de Faust* and the "Marche nocturne" in *L'Enfance du Christ*, for example.

The analysis is impressive and very sensitively handled but less fertile in its results than the simpler observations which are often strikingly perceptive: that Berlioz's modality is always temporary and local, for example; that his harmonizations are varied not for the sake of diversity but because they have no basic pattern; that chromatic modulations are expressive gestures rather than strictly musical processes; that overtures and symphonic movements in Berlioz are essentially the same; that his canon is often heterophony, that euphoniums make good substitutes for ophicleides, that the "solid underlying sense pointed out by reductive analysis evaporates in performance". His most important conclusion, that Berlioz is a decorative rather than an architectural composer, is surely correct, but it is a conclusion reached from the author's judgment rather than from his elaborate structural investigations, and all the sounder for that.

## The escapable truth

Nikolai Tolstoy

PEYER KURTH  
*Anastasia: The Life of Anna Anderson*  
450pp. Cape. £10.95.  
0224 02951 7

In the early 1920s a young woman by the name of Anna Anderson, who died last week, put forward the startling claim that she was in fact the Grand Duchess Anastasia, youngest daughter of Tsar Nicholas II—which, if true, would have meant that she had somehow miraculously escaped from the massacre by the Bolsheviks of the Russian Imperial family at Ekaterinburg in July 1918. In *Anastasia: The Life of Anna Anderson* Peter Kurth examines in detail the story of her claim, assembling a vast array of hitherto neglected material while indicating evidence still withheld, notably the papers of Ambassador Zahle held by the Danish Crown and those of Grand Duke Andrew in the possession of the present heir to the throne of the Romanovs, the Grand Duke Vladimir Kirillovich. Kurth's account is both scholarly and very readable, and is unlikely to be superseded.

The story is well worth telling. On February 17, 1920, a young woman was rescued from an apparent suicide attempt in the Landwehr Canal in Berlin and taken to the Däldorf Asylum. Nearly two years later she said that she was in reality the Grand Duchess Anastasia of Russia. She recollected being taken in a semi-conscious state in a wagon across endless miles of Russian roads. Her protector was a soldier named Tchakovsky, whose child she bore and whom she later married when they reached the safety of Romania. (Uncountably, the wedding was in a Catholic church.) After a year in Bucharest, she had come to Berlin to seek out "her mother's" (the Empress's) family, but lost her nerve on approaching the Netherlands Palace.

This astonishing claim swiftly reached the ears of members of the White Russian colony in Berlin: a small group of well-wishers succeeded in removing the claimant from the asylum and provided her with a home. Thenceforth she was the centre of a controversy that continues to this day. This was ensured by the apparent impossibility of providing certain proof of the real Grand Duchess's death, and equally of disproving the claimant's story. The massacre at Ekaterinburg had taken place in circumstances of great secrecy, and effective measures had been adopted to destroy the

occupied the town, an investigation was set up, but absolute evidence of the deaths of all the Imperial family was lacking. The only eye-witness was a captured Bolshevik soldier, one of the murderers, who asserted that he had seen all the children killed. But as he had (understandably) suffered considerable maltreatment at the hands of his captors, doubt has been cast on his testimony.

The points in her favour were the failure to provide any satisfactory account of her life prior to her arrival in Berlin; her apparently intimate knowledge of Russia, and Russian Court life in particular; and (in the eyes of many) her refined manner and apparent resemblance to the Grand Duchess. A number of people who had known the real Anastasia declared their total confidence, after conversing with the claimant, that they were one and the same person.

The objections were also strong. She was rather shorter than would have been expected of a fully-grown Anastasia. Worse was the fact that she spoke little or no Russian, a fact she and others explained by her not implausible revulsion at what she had experienced at the hands of Russians. At times she used chance words or phrases in that language, and impressed some by appearing to understand Russian spoken about her. But the admirably full accounts of conversations provided by Kurth strongly suggest that she acquired a smattering of knowledge over a period of time, and that she became adept at picking up the gist of what Russians were saying in their own language.

As for her general manner, extremes of disagreement prevailed. To some she displayed many flashes of the charm, vivacity and humour of the authentic Anastasia. Others, like Prince Felix Youssouppov (the murderer of Rasputin), found her "nervous, hysterical, vulgar and common". That she should be nervous and hysterical would be understandable enough were her story true, but there is the much less acceptable evidence that she was indeed "vulgar and common". Her manners were on the whole appalling, in stark contrast to the impeccable politeness of the last Empress or her children. She was frequently petulant, surly, ungrateful and vituperative. She also appears to have been extremely ignorant. She was also curiously reluctant for several years to attend an Orthodox service, where, minimal knowledge of the ritual would have been necessary. Her supporters stressed her extraordinary ignorance of the value of money, and that whatever point to a very different view of her character and from that of limitless wealth.

Kurth makes a lot of the refusal of different people—the Romanov family in particular—to interview the claimant. The Grand Duchess Olga, Anastasia's aunt, did so, however. She travelled to the patient's bedside, expressing acute sympathy, and cautious acceptance of the identification. This she later retracted, but with a proviso which can never be entirely absent: "My feeling is that she is *not* the one . . . but one can't say she is *not* as a fact—as there are still many strange and inexplicable facts not cleared up." In another letter she was still more emphatic: "There is *no* resemblance, and she is undoubtedly *not* A." Nevertheless she remained "haunted by the fear of committing an irreparable error".

For every visitor who found reason to recognize the Grand Duchess, there was another who rejected her. Matters became embittered and attitudes entrenched by other considerations and loyalties. When it came to be believed (erroneously, it appears) that a huge sum of money was held in trust for Anastasia at banks in London and elsewhere, enormously expensive law-suits were got up. These did however enable a great deal of evidence to be paraded and examined in a more judicial way than hitherto. Experts on handwriting, skull-formations, ear-patterns were summoned on either side. But their conflicting testimonies served only to prove this type of evidence too inconclusive to be effective.

Peter Kurth himself is clearly convinced that Anna Anderson was indeed the Grand Duchess. But it seems to me that he and everyone else (including, remarkably, the German judges hearing the case at Hamburg) have overlooked the one crucial piece of evidence which firmly proves the contrary. In 1965 Prince Frederick of Saxe-Altenburg and the counsel for Anna Anderson, Wollmann, tracked down a remarkable witness: Rudolf Lacher, an Austrian living at Steinhilf in the Tyrol. In 1918 Lacher, then an Austrian prisoner-of-war, had found himself at Ekaterinburg. He had been appointed personal orderly to Yurovsky, the Bolshevik commander who had personally arranged the massacre, and had been resident in the Ipatievsky house that very night. When the Prince and Wollmann asked him to testify in the hearing at Hamburg, he suddenly lost his nerve, claiming that he feared the Soviets would kill him should they learn of his existence. He added that in any case Yurovsky had locked him in his room, preventing him from knowing what was going on. He did, however, produce some small articles be-

longing to the Tsar: a gold case, some handkerchiefs, and a cigarette holder. There was no denying his genuineness, even if as a witness he was useless.

It came as an extraordinary surprise, therefore, when in January 1966 lawyers opposing Anna Anderson's claim produced Lacher as a witness for their side. His appearance in court caused a sensation. "He was a cold man . . . cold as ice, who talked with a total lack of expression in his voice of the sight of the Tsar's four daughters being hurried down the staircase on the night of the murder, sobbing as they went and clutching each other." Still claiming to have been locked in his room, Lacher explained he had glimpsed this pathetic scene through his keyhole. Shortly afterwards he heard bursts of gunfire. He climbed on his bed and, looking out of his basement window, counted "eleven bloody bundles" being piled on to a truck. "Eleven" could only include Anastasia, the Tsar and Tsarina, their five children and four servants.

But so far from damning the claimant's case, this seemed to assist it—at least in court. Wollmann triumphantly proved with the aid of maps and photographs of the Ipatievsky house that Lacher could not possibly have seen what he claimed from that window. To Lacher's stolid reassertion of his claim, Wollmann scornfully rejoined: "Either you're lying when you say you were locked in your room or you're lying when you say you saw the bodies!" There was no denying the force of this, and the court moved on to consider further evidence.

If, as Wollmann made clear, Lacher was lying when he claimed to have peeped from the window, what was the alternative? If Lacher was not locked in his room as he claimed why did he pretend he was? Can anyone seriously doubt that Lacher had in fact been one of the party of murderers, and that he had therefore the best of reasons for knowing that there were eleven, not ten, "bloody bundles" thrown on the truck? It may be objected that, as Lacher was a proven liar, his testimony as to the number of bodies was of no value. But the lie he told was necessary to conceal the fact that he had participated in a brutal crime, which many people would wish to avenge. It looks as if Lacher had resorted to the classic technique of deception under interrogation: stick to the truth in everything but the respect in which it incriminates yourself. Had he really, as Wollmann seems to have assumed, been able to see nothing it was surely in his interest to say so.

## Movements in common

Brigid Brophy

ROBERT K. WALLACE  
*Jane Austen and Mozart: Classical Equilibrium*  
in Fiction and Music  
295pp. University of Georgia Press. \$25.  
08203 0671 1

Let no pennies be caught by the title. "Rosen and Girdlestone" would have been more descriptive. Robert Wallace scarcely lets you glimpse Jane Austen and Mozart except through the veils of what others say about them. I am co-opted myself to provide one wisp—not from the quite numerous and quite long passages about Jane Austen in my book on Mozart as dramatist but, perversely, from a stray comparison reprinted in an academic symposium. Even the simple observation that the K503 piano concerto has "the longest first movement in all of Mozart's instrumental music" is advanced not on Mr Wallace's own authority but under the shield of "as Girdlestone points out".

This timidity looks like wise caution when you reach a thought that is, presumably, Wallace's own. He interrupts his discussion of ambiguity in classical novels and (where he stretches the meaning of the word) music with an imperative "Consider El Greco's 'Burial of Count Orgaz'". Describing that by no means classical painting he says: "Behind the crowd of earthly mourners are flames from torches". He then asks: "But are they flames? Could they not also be the feet of angels from the heavenly plane of the painting?" This comparatively extensive volume does not include a reproduction of the painting, no doubt because it would have returned to the question the too cogent reply that no, they could not—not unless the angels are remarkably elongated, even by El Greco standards, and distorted into the bargain, since the torches are at the left and right of the picture area and the angels in the centre.

Were Wallace correct in his claim that the objects depicted "are, to the attentive eye, both torches and feet", they would be visual puns like Magritte's scudding clouds that are leaves. They might be compared with, say, Mary Crawford's naval pun, in *Mansfield Park*, about "ears and voices". Wallace, however, compares them to the first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice*: "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife". And he is saying that he confuses the ambig-

guity of puns with the ambiguity of an ironic tone.

Oddly for a writer who spends his first seventy-six pages on a schema of what is to come and the terminology to be used, he tumbles into many such tangles. He declares that such terms as "equilibrium, balance, proportion, symmetry" etc "do—or may—have similar meanings in both music and fiction". A writer who fails to distinguish music and fiction from musical and literary criticism is on rocky ground when he reproves writers who use "terminology from one field to describe aspects of another" and when he warns readers that the term "theme" is used imprecisely in literary criticism but "is quite precise in music criticism". As evidence of his precision he quotes the definition in the *Harvard Brief Dictionary of Music*, "a melody which, by virtue of its characteristic design, prominent position, or special treatment becomes a basic element in the structure of a composition", without noticing that "melody" itself is scarcely precise, since what is incontestably a melody to one pair (or one generation) of ears may be the merest motif to another, and that "characteristic", "prominent" and "special" ooze vagueness.

Low-grade precision is what Wallace brings to the nub of his book, which turns out to compare not Jane Austen with Mozart but three of her novels (*Pride and Prejudice*, *Emma* and *Persuasion*) with three of his piano concertos (K271, K503 and K595 respectively). More stress than it will bear is put on the coincidence that the concerti have three movements apiece and the novels were written, conformably with the eighteenth and nineteenth-century custom, for publication in three volumes. Bars 196 to 281 of K271 are labelled "Recapitulation" and paralleled with pages 74 to 91 of *Pride and Prejudice*, labelled "Longbourn—Netherfield Recapitulation", but due attention is denied to the different ways in which music and fiction have to recapitulate, whereas verbatim repetition in novels is unbearable.

Some eyewitness is tossed in: three notes of K503 are found "somehow infinitely moving". They are as moving as Emma's tears. There is a pervasive middle, of the kind Wallace chides in others, between the musicalological sense in which the solo piano is a "voice" in the texture of a concerto and the voice or tone of a heroine. The solo voice in K271 is described, in yet another quotation from Girdlestone, as "proud and self-assured" and is likened to the personality of Elizabeth Bennet. This, which

might deceive a novice into supposing the novel to have a first-person narrative, makes nonsense of the structural parallel. Elizabeth does not appear or speak, though she is spoken of, in the first chapter, but K271 is unique among Mozart's piano concerti in that the solo piano enters in the second bar.

History forbids Jane Austen to have influenced Mozart. She did not publish within his lifetime. The reverse influence is almost as improbable. The only Mozart work she owned a copy of is a piano version of a stolen version (by Attwood) of "Non più andrai". Her letters suggest that though she played she did not, at least in some moods, enjoy music. These facts reduce Wallace's book to a self-indulgent game. He stows them away in an appendix, where he tries but, happily, fails to discredit Patrick Piggott's charming book *The Innocent Diversion: Music in the Life and Writings of Jane Austen*, but there is no concealing that his

thesis boils down to the adage "Great minds think alike".

There was indeed an astounding (to us who live, often to our benefit, in a disintegrating culture) homogeneity in the arts in Europe from about 1700 to about 1830, but to explore it would take a well-informed and sensitive mind. Mr Wallace could with as much validity have brought a third genius of the period, John Nash, into his game. He claims that the "carefully ordered syntax" of the first sentence of *Pride and Prejudice* "creates a formal equilibrium" that he matches to the enunciation of the opening theme of K271. He might have added with as much truth and as little point that the same function is performed by columns or pilasters at the entrance to a building.

The acknowledgments at the beginning include one to "the students who have studied music and literature with me". From me their fate elicits the exclamatory sigh "Angels' feet!"



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# Doubtful remedies

Susan Strange

ALEC CAIRCROSS and BARRY EICHENGREEN  
*Sterling In Decline: The Devaluations of 1931, 1949 and 1967*  
 261pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £19.50.  
 0631 133682

More books like this should be written. That is to say, more people like Sir Alec Cairncross who have had personal, hands-on experience of economic decision-making in British government should have the courage and the sense of social responsibility to pass judgment (or if not judgment, at least informed and thoughtful comment) on the events and the periods of crisis-management with which they themselves were intimately involved. Too often, to judge by the examples of some top civil servants, Pontius Pilate is alive and well in Whitehall, the bureaucrats wash their hands of responsibility and politicians are welcome to the blame and odium. Meanwhile, senior officials enjoy their immunity from publicity along with their index-linked pensions (not to mention City directorships after they retire). As Sir Alec's comments often clearly show, civil servants have no great regard for the decision-making ability of politicians. They are convinced that they usually know better and that in modern times at least, and on issues of monetary management, the reluctance of politicians to heed the clear signals of the market has usually been foolish, obstinate and very expensive for the country and its economy. That, on the evidence presented in this book, seems a fair judgment and it contains some shrewd asides from Sir Alec on the balance of political power in the Labour cabinets of both Attlee in 1949 and Wilson in 1967.

These are the two devaluations which he analyses. The earlier example of 1931, when Britain devalued by "coming off gold", is written by the younger, and more theoretically-minded colleague, Barry Eichengreen, an economics lecturer at Harvard. The latter rashly tries to apply economic modelling to the disputed question among economic historians as to whether the 1931 devaluation was the accidental consequence of foreign bank failures and the nervousness of financial operators in a world hit by depression, or, alternatively, the predictable outcome of trends in the British balance of payments, and in particular of the declining trend of income from overseas investments. Predictably (in my view, at least) the results of the modelling exercise are inconclusive. As Dr Eichengreen has to admit these methods require too many restrictive assumptions to yield positive results. For instance, one must assume that capital in 1931 was perfectly mobile, that bonds denominated in different currencies were perfect substitutes for each other and that Bank of England interventions

were uncomplicated by considerations of domestic or foreign policy. His conclusion is that "there is no evidence of balance of payments pressures of a magnitude that could have been offset by the level of Bank rate actually maintained." If a one-legged man were to be knocked over in a crowd, one could as well say that there was no evidence of pressures that could not be resisted if he had kept his balance. The fact that in 1931 the Bank compensated for the weakness of sterling by increasing bank-rate to staunch the reserve loss does not prove its ability to resist indefinitely the pressures coming from the weakened world economy. Arguing that the man would probably have kept his balance if the crowd had vanished does not surely get us very far – or do much for the reputation of economics as a science.

Sir Alec, being a wily old bird, is much more cautious. Although he begins by saying that the purpose of the three studies is to analyse the consequences of the devaluations for the economy at large, and that it is necessary to distinguish carefully between the effects of devaluation and those of coincidental changes in economic policy, when it comes to the point he attempts nothing so rash. He tells the story, and tells it clearly and fairly and has to concede that the verdict is still an open one so far as it

concerns the macroeconomic consequences of lowering the exchange rate. That point at least should penetrate the economics seminar-rooms at Harvard and elsewhere: sometimes a devaluation turns the economy around, sometimes it makes matters worse. It all depends, and it is therefore dangerous (and even dishonest) to pretend that trade and finance in the international political economy are uncomplicated by politics, technology and irrationality in market behaviour.

The other points that emerge loud and clear from the narrative are that politicians – even those as distinguished as Stafford Cripps – were usually culpably dilatory in taking necessary decisions, and that some – like Harold Wilson or Hugh Gaitskell, who had pretensions to an understanding of economic forces and issues – seldom bothered to listen to their officials. In 1967, indeed, an earlier and small devaluation, deliberately undertaken, might have avoided some of the worst consequences not only for the British economy but also for the whole fixed exchange-rate system. What that episode did do was to engender grave doubts about the effectiveness of exchange-rate changes, in an inflationary and highly integrated world financial and banking system, as a means of eliminating balance of payments deficits. Instead of curing the deficit, they

might even breed new deficits and new devaluations through the operation of vicious and virtuous circles.

Certainly, the vulnerability of sterling to a loss of confidence in financial markets was something that was persistently underrated by British governments, including the officials, as was the dominance of the capital account and even short-term monetary movements over the trade account.

One other red-hot issue tackled in this retrospective study is whether a devaluation, if it is to be effective, must be accompanied by drastic cuts in public spending. Here again, the answer is far from clear. In 1932, for instance, increased public spending after the event actually aided economic recovery and a 6 per cent increase in the money supply apparently had few ill-effects on market confidence. In 1949, the government followed up with both a credit squeeze and an 18 per cent boost in the money supply: within nine months both policies were overwhelmed by the economic repercussions of the Korean War. In 1967, domestic factors were dwarfed by the post-devaluation haemorrhage of sterling from central banks. There could be no clearer demonstration of the pitfalls awaiting the economist in pursuit of a general theory, applicable at all times and in all places.

## The need for imprecision

T. W. Hutchison

ANDREW M. KAMARCK  
*Economics and the Real World*  
 165pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £15.  
 0631 133445

For over ten years, leading economists have been proclaiming the existence of a "crisis" in their subject. Certainly there has been a more than usually persistent, profound, and acrimonious disagreement over the main issue of public policy – especially in Great Britain, where the debate has taken a more dogmatic and party-political form than in Germany or the US. There has been a considerable loss of public prestige, felt more acutely because of the extreme contrast with the preceding twenty years or so of the Keynesian boom following the Second World War, when, with both the economy of the free world, and the subject of economics, apparently enjoying such remarkable success, there was a period of influence and acclaim for economists paralleled only by that enjoyed by the English Classics roughly a hundred years earlier.

However, no basic theoretical or methodological "crisis" can be said to exist simply because broadly agreed solutions for current policy dilemmas have not been forthcoming, which

meet the near-utopian targets, together with the kind of desired institutional framework, canvassed by politicians, ideologues and professional dissatisfaction-mongers. But a kind of underlying crisis may be said to persist, in that large areas of economic theorizing, especially at the textbook level, continue to depend on over-simple abstractions, or extreme assumptions, notably with regard to knowledge and expectations.

Moreover, it has long seemed that these oversimplifications cannot be transcended, or abandoned, without a quite fundamental shift in method away from the kind of ultra-refined, precise and rigorous model-building which still, in much teaching and research, retains among academics a highly questionable reputation. Indeed, the question of the very tenuous relevance (if any) to real-world problems of "much of economic theory" – which is pursued as "a good game", as Sir John Hicks has bluntly put it – continues to be fudged and muddled by leading theorists and textbook writers. Nevertheless, though some of the more confident and dogmatic practitioners dismiss any "crisis" as confined simply to other brands of theory than their own, in the course of such a long period of glaring disagreement fundamental questions have been raised and discussed, and a healthy and crucial kind of progress in knowledge has been to some extent achieved with regard to the recognition and realization of ignorance and inevitable limitations, and the deflation of pretensions and illusions.

This is the direction in which Andrew M. Kamarck's brief volume makes its contribution. The author has spent most of the past thirty years with the World Bank, for part of the time as Director of its Economics Department. He has therefore been in a position to look long and hard at the state of the subject, especially with regard to what is widely regarded and claimed as its end-product – that is, the kind of guidance on policies which may, or may not, be forthcoming from the data, analyses and theories that economists have to offer.

Mr Kamarck begins by observing about university economics departments and their products over the past forty years: "I learned that the economic analysis that is actually useful for guiding government decisions is fairly good but highly effective when supplemented by good judgement. . . . It also found, as have many others, that in the last generation many young economists, fresh out of the university, are ill-equipped to confront the economic problems of the real world. The brightest of these, if they wish to be effective, learn to discard as 'useless' or 'misleading' much of what they have been rewarded in the university for learning."

The author duly warns, however, against discarding all of the economics that is learned at university or against "a general attack on the whole economic approach to policy-making."

Kamarck then emphasizes an important distinction between "accuracy" and "precision". These terms should not be interpreted as overlapping. Rough "accuracy", in terms of proximity to true values, is all that usually can be achieved in economics; while "precision", in terms of sharpness of definition, or specification, will often be spurious or misleading.

After denouncing the dangerous doctrine that the unreality of a theory's assumptions does not detract from its value, and warning against misconceived comparisons between economics and physics, Kamarck emphasizes that "the frequent practice in economics of developing an elaborate model with a relative or total indifference to the methods and possibilities of observing or measuring the elusive quantities concerned is exactly counter to the real spirit of the hard sciences." However, "more prestige is acquired from applying the latest complex techniques to good, bad or indifferent data than in arriving at valid, verifiable and useful results".

In the ensuing chapters Kamarck reviews the main pitfalls (mostly fairly familiar, but still often fatal) which beset national income concepts and analysis, and the conclusions which may be derived therefrom. He also warns against the presumption, quite unjustified by recent evidence, that the more complex and sophisticated econometric models become, the more accurate the predictions which they will yield.

The author comes to some drastic conclusions. If spurious and misleading precision is to be avoided, Kamarck insists, "except for economists who are primarily interested in constructing science fiction models about a non-existent reality, it is essential that anyone who works with economic data have some experience in the process of raw data gathering". A final warning even claims that "the economic difficulties of the present are probably due more to the prevalent scholasticism that diverts many of the most brilliant of the profession away from work on real problems than we are willing to admit".

More would have been welcome from Kamarck on just how far, and in what ways, basic statistical data can be improved, and also on the ways in which teaching may be re-directed so as to equip students more effectively for dealing with real-world problems. But, in any case, whether or not improved judgment can be inculcated in school and university courses, at least the need for it can be insisted upon and demonstrated. This book provides a very useful and comprehensive, though brief, discussion of basic difficulties in the nature of the subject and its material, which, frequently in textbooks as well as more generally, are disregarded, or seriously underestimated, but which need to be faced, appreciated and judiciously digested, at all levels.

## Thinking as per program

Stephen Stich

P. N. JOHNSON-LAIRD  
*Towards a Cognitive Science of Language, Inference, and Consciousness*  
 513pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50 (paperback, £9.95).  
 0521 241235

During the past century there have been countless cases in which the advance of science has upset what was taken to be the natural order of things. But the recent emergence of Cognitive Science on the intellectual scene may be the first case in which both the baptism and the baptismal gift preceded the birth. Cognitive Science, so it is said, is a new discipline emerging in the area where the interests of cognitive psychologists, computer scientists, linguists and philosophers overlap. There are conflicting views on just where and when the baptism of this new discipline took place. Some knowledgeable observers trace it to the founding of the *Journal Cognitive Science* in 1977. Others point to earlier celebrations. But all agree that the baptismal gift was provided by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation which, in the late 1970s, decided to commit large sums of money to conferences and university programmes in Cognitive Science.

The recipients of this largesse – the Sloan Rangers they called themselves in private – were hardly of a single mind on just what Cognitive Science should be, or on who should get the next helping of Sloan money. And for a while it began to look as if the whole idea might be a colossal mistake. Perhaps psychologists, computer scientists, linguists and philosophers had very little to say to one another. Perhaps the disciplinary traditions and paradigms that separated them would make effective interdisciplinary cooperation impossible. Perhaps the Sloan Foundation had been snookered into spending its millions in the wrong place.

The good news about P. N. Johnson-Laird's impressive new volume (and about several other books that have appeared in the last year or two) is that these fears can be laid to rest. Scientists and scholars from divergent disciplines can learn to learn from each other. After many false labours the interdisciplinary discipline of Cognitive Science has been born. Before elaborating on this news, a bit of background is in order. Why should anyone have thought that such an odd mix of disciplines would have interests in common?

A central doctrine shared, sometimes tacitly, by most people involved in the Cognitive Science movement is what Johnson-Laird calls *functionalism*. The core idea of functionalism is that the mind stands to the brain as a program stands to a computer. It follows from this view that the essence of mentality – like the essence of a computer program – is to be found in a pattern of information flow and control, not in the physical stuff or substance in which the pattern is realized. Functionalists disagree both with dualists, who think that thought and consciousness are properties of a special non-physical mind-stuff, and with neo-vitalists, like John Searle, who hold that thinking is a blood sport which can be engaged in only by a brain made of protoplasm. Since on their view the essence of thought and consciousness is captured in a program, functionalists maintain that, for mental processes, simulation is replication. All sorts of things, from wars to hurricanes, can be simulated on a computer, though no one would imagine that a computer simulation of a storm would flood the basement. For most physical processes there is all the difference in the world between a computer simulation and the real thing. But, if functionalism is right, the distinction between simulation and replication is inessential in the domain of mental processes. A computer running the program my brain is simulating is thinking what I am thinking and is experiencing a conscious life parallel to mine.

The doctrine of functionalism, first developed in the early 1960s by philosophers of mind led by Hilary Putnam, Jerry Fodor and D. M. Armstrong, is one obvious place where the interests of philosophers, cognitive psychologists and computer scientists converge. The study of reasoning and inference is another domain in which there is a *prima facie* overlap of interests. From Aristotle onward philosophers and logicians have been concerned with how people should reason. And from its very beginnings modern experimental psychology has explored how people actually do reason. In artificial intelligence a central concern has been to build systems which draw from their data inferences which are both reasonable and appropriate to the task at hand. It has typically been assumed that people do, and machines might, bring off the business of inference by exploiting a mental logic – an internal representation of the sort of formal system constructed by logicians.

Language, its use and its comprehension, is another domain in which the interests of psychologists and philosophers intersect. Here, of course, they are joined by linguists, and also by those computer scientists interested in building systems capable of processing natural language. "Parsing" is a term which has been pressed into service to describe the process of comprehending a sentence and recovering its meaning. Since the output of the parsing process is a thought or a representation of the meaning of the sentence, linguists concerned with parsing have increasingly been led to join forces with psychologists to investigate just how thoughts are represented in the mind.

The bulk of Johnson-Laird's book is devoted to inference and language processing. Under both headings he provides a sophisticated survey of previous work in the relevant disciplines and then develops his own theory, in which the notion of a mental model looms large. It is worth pausing to note just how extraordinary it is that Johnson-Laird's survey of the literature can be described as sophisticated. A depressingly large proportion of previous work in Cognitive Science has been devoted to reinventing the wheel, and to building it square – as a "first approximation". Speech-act theory, modal logic, model-theoretic semantics, recursive function theory, the puzzles of intentionality and more have all been "rediscovered" by the intrepid pioneers of Cognitive Science. But typically the account given of previous work in these areas has been garbled beyond recognition. To make matters worse, these garbled accounts are often followed by the grandiose announcement that venerable problems in philosophy or psychology or semantics have finally yielded to the deeper insights provided by the new science. As is the case in sociobiology, which has also been afflicted by delusions of

intellectual grandeur, it usually turns out that, far from having solved some venerable problem, the over-enthusiastic cognitive scientist has not even understood it.

Johnson-Laird's treatment of inference and language processing stands in stark contrast to this sorry tradition. Although his training is in experimental psychology, when he writes about logic or grammar or semantics he does so with impressive insight and erudition. His expositions are lucid, well structured and sprinkled with helpful illustrations just where they are most needed. More remarkable still, Johnson-Laird succeeds in capturing some of the excitement in areas of research that strike all but the initiated as forbiddingly technical. The brilliant chapter on parsing, for example, provides the best and most exciting overview of recent work that we are likely to have for a long time to come. And the few pages on Montague grammar are themselves worth the price of the book. (In paperback, I hasten to add. The hardbound edition, like so many recent Cambridge University Press publications, is priced at the extortionate level that used to be the exclusive province of obscure Dutch publishers.) Some of this material is tough going: it's not a book for the *Psychology Today* crowd. But for the serious reader who wants to know what has been going on in these areas in recent years, there is no better place to find out.

The theory Johnson-Laird himself develops to account for the processes of inference and language processing grows out of his extensive work on syllogistic reasoning. The core idea is that when we reason syllogistically we construct one or more internal models, not altogether unlike the sorts of models envisioned in model-theoretic semantics. Johnson-Laird shows how the construction and manipulation of such models can account for much of the data about our successes and failures in syllogistic reasoning. Unlike other accounts of the processes underlying inference, Johnson-Laird's story also explains which inferences people do and do not tend to draw spontaneously. The theory is a radical departure from earlier accounts which postulated mental logics, and heuristics for exploiting them. On Johnson-Laird's theory there is no need for a mental logic. An indefatigable experimenter, Johnson-Laird reports numer-

ous studies all comfortably compatible with his theory. I think it is a pretty safe bet that in the psychology of inference this is where the action will be for the next few years at least.

Things get rather more murky when Johnson-Laird attempts to apply his notion of mental models to language processing. His central thesis is that in comprehending a sentence the mind typically constructs two distinct sorts of representations. One of these, which he calls a propositional representation, is a more or less language-like affair. The other, the mental model, is not at all like a sentence in a formalized language. But despite many pages devoted to the topic, it is never entirely clear just what does and does not count as a mental model, nor how mental models differ from the many other abstract representations – "scripts", "frames", "prototypes", "MOPS", and the like – that have been postulated by other theorists. Still, there is a great deal of sophisticated analysis and innovative theorizing in the chapters on language. And had Johnson-Laird stopped when he had said his piece on language processing this would have been a splendid book rather than just a very good one.

But he didn't stop. In the final three chapters Johnson-Laird succumbs to the temptation to see his nascent theory of mental models as the solution to everyone else's problem. For linguists and philosophers of language there is an account of definite and indefinite descriptions (three pages), of referential and attributive descriptions (three pages), of pronouns (five pages), of anaphora and ellipsis (two pages), and of propositional attitudes (eight pages). For philosophers of mathematics there is an account of the mental representation of the infinite (three pages) and a refutation of Platonism (about a paragraph). For the metaphysicians there is an account of truth (five pages). And for the intellectual world at large there is a theory of consciousness (ten pages).

The infant discipline of Cognitive Science has attracted an impressive collection of bright, creative and energetic practitioners. It is to be hoped that there will come a time when these gifted people resist the temptation to view their latest clever idea as the panacea for the intellectual problems of Western Civilization. When that time comes, Cognitive Science will have come of age.

## The symmetrical stream

P. H. Matthews

KENNETH L. PIKE and EVELYN G. PIKE  
*Text and Tagmeme*  
 129pp. Frances Pinter. £11.50.  
 08161873459

Structural linguistics has proliferated schools. Some become dominant, or at least have wide prestige, others are widely ignored, despite in many cases the real merit of their founders. Not all who profess the discipline would ordinarily lecture on systemic linguistics, though Michael Halliday, whose theory it is, enjoys wide respect. While transformational grammar means something to the general reader, stratificational grammar does not, and tagmemics, with which this book deals, will strike many as a mere barbarism. Robin P. Fawcett, of the Polytechnic of Wales, has therefore decided to start an "Open Linguistics" series, in which it is evident that these schools, in particular, will be well represented.

Of these so-called Cinderellas of linguistics, the school founded by Kenneth Pike is much the largest. An amazing practical-phonetician and an indefatigable analyst of languages up and down the globe, Pike has for many years combined an academic post with the directorship of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, an evangelical organization whose members are widely trained in Professor Pike's method; and for some languages, in areas where few other field-workers have operated, descriptions in their particular style may be the only ones available. Hence the school has to be noticed.

Pike's main ideas, as found in this and other recent works devoted to them, are as follows:

Any text or "stream of speech" is said to have three simultaneous structures: one phonological (sound structure), another grammatical (words, phrases and so on), and the third "referential". This last "has to do with what a stream of speech . . . is talking about". Each structure is hierarchical; accordingly the text is divided into larger and smaller parts. Each part is then said to have four features. It will be of a certain class (in *He smokes* the first word is a pronoun); it will occupy a slot or position in its context (*he* is in subject slot); within this context it will have a certain role (*he* has the role of actor); it is also in a relation of cohesion with other parts in that and other streams of speech (*he* agrees with *smokes* and forms part of a paradigm with *they*). These features – class, slot, role, cohesion – define the unit which is called the "tagmeme". The way to apply this model, exemplified very clearly in an analysis of seventy pages contributed to this book by Pike's wife, is to take any material in any language and simply work out the best way of cutting it up and labelling it until every feature, of every unit, at every level that one decides to set up, has been supplied.

It will be clear already that the school is animated by a passion for symmetry. This is common among structural linguists: Pike is not the first theorist who has searched, in particular, for parallels between form and meaning. But one has to take care that symmetry is not purchased with category mistakes. In Mrs Pike's account the referential hierarchy includes, among other things, events; these are indeed what some texts (though not every text, surely?) are about, but it is not clear how they can be parts of the stream of speech, as words and syllables are. It also includes "referential units" such as first-person or indicative; now these might indeed be seen as "in" the text. But

that is precisely because they are not what it is about, but the means – most people would say grammatical means – by which reference is made. The grammatical hierarchy turns out, in practice, to be similarly heterogeneous. For example, every stream of speech is said to include an "I-thou-here-now-axis", subsuming clauses "I say something to you"/"I or we hear something from you", each of which is said to have a grammatical subject, object and so on, represented in just the same way as the units actually uttered. For the second of these clauses one could not even claim that there is an ellipsis.

These are surely blatant mistakes, and one has to ask why they are tolerated. The answer, one suspects, is simply that the method "works" and is felt, above all, to be straightforward in application. The Summer Institute of Linguistics is large and not everyone in it has the highest academic credentials. Nevertheless its job is to describe languages, therefore its members must be taught a framework which, be it with rough justice or a certain disregard for philosophical finickiness, will provide an assortment of readily usable categories into which their field data can be put. Pike remarked some years ago that when he began his career the study of an unknown language required genius. Now, he claimed, the art could be mastered by Grade C students.

Of his own ability there is no doubt. It is not easily appreciated in this book, less than half of which is his own. But he has done important work on Mexican Indian languages, and as a theorist too he has often shown striking and lonely insight. Though aged over seventy he conveys a vivid sense of excitement, even when, as in the last chapter of this book, he is simply playing with his own concept of the tagmeme to achieve still nearer terminology symmetry.

## Reading from Left to Right ONE MAN'S POLITICAL HISTORY

H.S. Ferns

Foreword by Malcolm Muggeridge

The intellectual and political odyssey of a concerned and active twentieth-century man, Henry Stanley Ferns describes his youth and university days in Canada; his further education in England in the late 30s; his conversion to Marxism; his communist activities at Cambridge, especially with a "colonial group" that included future prominent Third World figures; happenings in high places during his employment in the office of Prime Minister Mackenzie King; the case of Herbert Norman; his return to England and appointment to the University of Birmingham; and much else. Full of detailed pen portraits of people and events, large and small, it is a lively and picturesque story. £21.20.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS

Elv House, 87 Dover Street, London W1X 4HQ



# Behind the lines

Robert Hewison

There is a convention that the meetings of the Society of Bookmen – an august body of senior figures in the world of literature and publishing – are held *in camera*, and that no report is made of their discussions. But the literary world loves to gossip, and there are occasions when the issues raised are sufficiently explosive to cause reverberations beyond the closed doors of the Bookmen.

Such has been the case with the Society's most recent dinner, at the Saville Club on February 2. The guest of honour was the Secretary-General of the Arts Council, Luke Rittner. His audience was already exercised by rumours to the effect that the dissolution of the Arts Council's Literature Department had recently been proposed, and Mr Rittner was asked a question on that topic. According to my sources (for had I been at the dinner I would be honour bound not to tell you what happened) Mr Rittner replied that this was a possibility, just as the dissolution of the Music Department was a possibility. An accurate, if disingenuous, reply.

When I asked Mr Rittner if the several reports that had reached me of his remarks were true, he stuck by the convention that this had been a private occasion, and refused to comment. He did confirm that the Arts Council has its options open at present, since it is conducting a searching examination of its activities, but "I can't pre-empt anything that the advisory panels recommend to the Council, or what the Council might recommend itself".

In search of brighter enlightenment, I spoke to the Chairman of the Literature Panel, Marghanita Laski. She too confirmed that nothing had been decided, but she did not exactly spring to the Literature Department's defence. She wondered if a fully-fledged panel were really necessary. Other art forms, such as photography, survived without a specialist department, and even if (as I understand her) the present structure were to be dismantled, literature could be supported in some other way. Nothing, she repeated, was decided, but changes might be "a matter of more economical administration". The strength of the Arts Council's commitment to literature is such, it appears, that no one considers the dissolution of the Literature Department an impossibility.

★ ★ ★

The Arts Council has meanwhile produced a document which gives a forthright answer to the Government's proposals for the future of the Arts in the white paper, *Streamlining the Cities*. The abolition of the GLC and the six Metropolitan County Councils threatens to effect a drastic reduction in arts funding in England and Wales, as readers of "Behind the lines" last November will be aware. The Arts Council says the Government's proposals are "inadequate", the insufficiency of local funding has been "underestimated", and names a large number of "nationally and internationally renowned institutions" which would be "placed in jeopardy".

In its reply to the White Paper and the Arts Minister's accompanying consultative document, the Arts Council states (apparently) clearly of the "political issues raised by the Government's plans for 'streamlining'". Its concern is purely with the consequences for the Arts, and it produces figures which show that some £26½ million in arts funding have been thrown into question. The Arts Council has a direct interest in the reduction of only £3 million of this, but it wisely points out that the great bulk of the remainder goes to institutions in which the Arts Council's interest is indirect, but nevertheless real.

In the first instance it might be assumed that in the best of all possible worlds the smaller local authorities upon whom the responsibilities of the threatened bureaucracy will devolve will find the £26½ million from their own resources. But the Arts Council has had long experience of the narrow perspectives (and often straitened purses) of borough and district councils. "The Arts Council does not believe that local authority funding levels will survive the abolition of the GLC and MCCs unless special steps are taken to encourage contributions from successor authorities".

The danger to institutions which serve a wider area than their location for rateable purposes was tacitly recognized by the Arts Minister's consultative document, which elevated a handful of them, such as the Hallé Orchestra and the Walker Art Gallery, to national status, by promising them extra support from central funds. No organization in the entire Tyne and Wear area is to be supported; the list of exclusions in the GLC area is "too numerous to give in full". If the Arts Council is to be given extra money to help the selected few, the needs of all endangered organizations would have to be taken into account.

The Council also points out difficulties the Government appears to have overlooked. The Arts Council already contributes substantially to the Regional Arts Associations, as do local authorities, and the Metropolitan Councils and the GLC. If this last source of funds dries up, the Arts Council feels it cannot bridge the gap, for the pattern of funding would be seriously unbalanced, and with the exception of the GLC, the geographical areas of the RAAs do not match those of the Metropolitan Councils. The RAAs will have to sink or swim with their local councils, and it is plainly the Council's view that some of them risk drowning.

The Arts Council considers two possible solutions to the crisis that has been created. One is simply for the Council's funds to be increased to the extent that the shortfall can be made up, but this has the effect both of reducing the plurality of funding, and silencing local views on such matters. The other option, which the Council much prefers, is to create joint local authority boards which (presumably on the model of the ILEA) would have the power to raise money from the rates by power of precept. Thus a local voice would be preserved, and the new boards would have the added advantages of being able to deal with so-called "heritage" issues as well as funding the arts. In the case of London, the argument for the creation of such a body is "overwhelming".

The irony of this suggestion is that it would in effect recreate Metropolitan County Councils for the Arts. A fresh bureaucracy would have to take on the responsibilities of the old one. The present Government is no friend to the quango, and yet it has itself proposed the creation of such a body to run the GLC's cultural real estate on the South Bank. Here too the Arts Council sounds a warning. It does not believe that it would be possible to run the Festival Hall, the National Theatre, the National Film Theatre, the Hayward Gallery and the other concert halls "on anything approaching commercial lines".

The Minister for the Arts may argue that the proposals so calmly demolished by the Arts Council's reply are not yet hard policy. Privately, Lord Gowrie has made comforting noises when specific institutions under threat are mentioned. He says that the present levels of arts funding will be sustained after the abolitions, though he is already hinting that the local authority joint boards are a non-starter. The Arts Council is in no doubt that to rely on the good will of local district and borough councils to make up the missing £26½ million is "potentially disastrous".

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As a footnote to the Arts Council's defence of the many organizations under threat from the Government, among the "nationally and internationally renowned institutions" specifically mentioned is the Riverside Studios in Hammersmith. The Riverside has had important successes in both theatre and ballet. It runs an art gallery, it organizes creative writing classes, and it supports a bookshop. It is especially threatened, for its local borough expressly refuses to fund it on the grounds that this is a job for the Arts Council and the GLC. The Arts Council has such respect for the "nationally and internationally renowned" Riverside that it proposes to cease funding it entirely in April 1985.

★ ★ ★

You would be forgiven for thinking that the media hype of the Book Marketing Council's "Best Novels of Our Time" promotion was all

over last November. Yet it is only now that the actual marketing of the privileged titles is getting under way.

In an effort to restore flagging literary interest in the artificial controversy which the Book Marketing Council is hoping to promote, a discussion was mounted last week at the Institute of Contemporary Arts between two of the judges, Peter Parker and Elizabeth Jane Howard, and Lorna Sage and Beryl Bainbridge. The writer who did best out of the evening was the absent Anthony Burgess, whose useful crib *Ninety-Nine Novels: The Best in English Since 1939* (160pp. Allison and Busby, £6.95, 0 85031 584 0) is riding high on the back of the BMC's promotion. The writer who seemed most despairing was Beryl Bainbridge: "We are all sounding as though England is a literate country, and it is not". She later commented "I have the feeling that you should look all the books up, and then everyone will want to read". The idea suggests the theme for the next Book Marketing Council promotion: three High Court Judges will be invited to order the destruction of a dozen books at the hands of the public hangman. Guaranteed media attention world wide, great pictures, lots of free editorial – and no need for publishers to bother with the irksome task of finding new authors and publishing real books.

★ ★ ★

Candidates for the next Professorship of Poetry at Oxford do not have to have their nominations in until the closing date of May 20, but already names have begun to circulate in Senior Common Rooms. Since all MAs of the University are entitled to participate in the election for the Chair, the successful candidate depends as much on the efficiency of his or her unofficial managers as on a personal reputation.

The potential turn-out is believed to be over 30,000 but the requirement that MAs vote in person narrows the electoral college to those few thousand living in or near Oxford. The need to manage this vote provides endless opportunities for back-biting and log-rolling, but there is a real issue at stake: should the Professor of Poetry for the next five years be Professor, or Poet?

Now that poetry forms a regular part of the academic curriculum, there is a strong case that the University should exercise some modest literary patronage, and elect a practising poet who will be prepared to discuss work in progress, as well as to deliver the obligatory lectures and orations. The retiring Professor, John Jones of Merton College, is not a poet, and his tenure, during which he lectured, among other things, on Beethoven and Dos-

toevsky, may have strengthened the Apollonian case. Professor Jones, who himself conducted a very successful campaign for the Chair, has delivered some guarded thoughts on the subject recently in the *Oxford Mail*. It is up to the man who is doing the job to do it as well as he can, and in his own way. I feel we must not get stuck with the idea of "campus poet", who would be hanging around coffee shops or pubs, being THE POET AROUND THE PLACE, although that can be done, and was done very well by Wylan Audea.

So far, two poets have declared themselves, Peter Levi, who is a Fellow of St Catherine's College, and James Fenton, who lives in Oxford but has no academic post. Both regard themselves as friendly rivals, and believe, as Peter Levi says, "the important thing is that some poet ought to get it". A third potential candidate is Francis Warner, of St Peter's College, who describes himself as "poet and dramatist". These candidates may provoke counter nominations, and literary controversy being what it is these days, doubtless Ladbroke's will have to open a book. Voting takes place on May 31 and June 2.

★ ★ ★

Those fifty or so well-known writers who like to travel the developing lecture circuit will be pleased to know that the Literature Festivals Council has announced the speaking order for 1984. Lancaster runs from March 18 to 25; Essex from May 1 to 12, overlapping with Bracknell on 10 to 12 of that month. The Bath Festival now formally claims a literary programme from May 25 to June 10. Ilkley is being revived this year, from September 15 to 20, and then there is the usual log-jam in October, with Cheltenham, Kent, Oxford and Newcastle following hard on each other's heels.

The Literature Festivals Council is rightly proud of its achievement in raising the status of literary celebrations, and is critical of the lack of support for its members from publishers, who do not seem to appreciate the commercial benefits of putting writers in touch with readers. It is also keeping its own members in order by helping to standardize fees, and providing a forum in which to sort out squabbles over who invited which distinguished author where first. This year they have produced a joint promotional leaflet, *Literature Alive*, and the half-dozen or more literary festivals which have not yet joined the Council may well be advised to do so before the famous fifty are all engaged.

*Literature Alive*, and individual festival programmes are available from Pamela Chumley-Ross, Co-ordinator, The Literature Festivals Council, 21 Earl's Court Square, London SW5.

## AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

John Bury is Professor of History at the University of York.  
Brigid Brophy's *The Prince and the Wild Geese* was published last year.  
Mosco Carnier's books include *Puccini*, 1958.  
Michael Crawford is a Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge.  
Eamon Duffy is a Fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge.  
Roy Foster's *Lord Randolph Churchill: A Political Life* was published in 1981.  
George Gmelch is a lecturer in Slavonic Studies at the University of Cambridge.  
Jasper Griffin is a Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford.  
A. E. Harvey's books include *Jesus and the Constraints of History*, 1982.  
Peter Hebblethwaite is completing a major biography of Pope John XXIII.  
Robert Hewison's *Postlights: A Hundred Years of Cambridge Comedy* was published last year.  
J. H. Houlden is a lecturer in New Testament Studies at King's College, London.  
J. W. Hutchinson is the author of *The Philosophy and Politics of Economics*, 1981.  
Gabriel Josipovici's novel, *Conversations in Another Room*, will be published later this year.  
Hugh Macdonald is Cardine Professor of Music at the University of Glasgow.  
Brian Martin is the author of *John Henry Newman: His Life and Work*, 1982.  
David Martin is Professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics.  
P. H. Matthews is Professor of Linguistics at the University of Cambridge.  
Dennis Nineham is Professor of Theology at the University of Bristol.  
Reinhold O'Hanlon's *Joseph Conrad and Charles Darwin: The Influence of Scientific Thought on Conrad's Fiction* will be published later this year.  
Stephen Prickett is Professor of English at the Australian National University, Canberra.  
Claude Ravigne's books include *Cultures and the Gentle Reader: Studies in Swift and Our Times*, 1973.  
David Ridgway is co-editor of *Italy before the Romans*, 1979.  
Roger Scruton's books include *Kant*, 1982.  
Clive Siskind's collection of short stories, *Bed Bugs*, was published in 1982.  
Stephen Stich's *From Folk Psychology to Cognitive Science* was published last year.  
Susan Strange is Professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics.  
Archie Terry is Professor of Literature at the University of Essex.  
Nikolai Tolstoy's *The Tolstoy Twenty-Four Generations of Russian History* was published last year.  
Alan Watts is the Dean of St Paul's.  
Natalie Zemon Davis's *Revolution and the Word: A Study in the Social History of Literature* was published last year.

# Letters

T. S. Eliot

Sir, – In reply to Michael Hastings (Letters, February 17), I too would like to read T. S. Eliot's letters to Emily Hale, but a condition of her gift to Princeton University was that they must be kept sealed for fifty years from the death of the survivor. Knowing nothing of the matter, Eliot was shocked and angry when he returned from abroad in February 1957 to find a communication from the Librarian, William L. Dix, asking him to sign the agreement, and expressing pleasure in the acquisition. My copyright comes into force only when the containers are opened on October 12, 1919, not 2020 or, as stated in the printed text of *Tom and Viv*, 2030.

Mr Hastings writes that "the death of Hope Mirrieles placed on the market a considerable bequest of documents which shed light on the making of *Four Quartets*". It did nothing of the kind. Eliot's letters to her and Mrs Mirrieles went to America in her lifetime and all that remained were a number of inscribed books, and some manuscript pages of table-talk entitled "Tom Titbits" which are now in my possession. She had given me a copy of these reminiscences – occasionally jotted on the back of notes for her own work – before my marriage and extracts will appear in the *Correspondence*.

When making his bequest of unpublished Eliot material to King's College, Cambridge, John Hayward stated that it could only be seen by the Librarian until the year 2000, except with the permission of Eliot's literary executor, myself. This has meant that, at the Librarian's discretion, students and scholars have access to this collection. The Eliot-Hayward correspondence is reserved at present because it refers to living people, but Dame Helen Gardner drew on it for her authoritative study, *The Composition of "Four Quartets"* (1978).

From the considerable amount of "documentary material" which has passed through the international salerooms and book-sellers' catalogues since 1965, Robert Hewison can be assured that I have purchased precisely two items, both necessary for my editorial work: Virginia Woolf's bank-book (with a cheque-book stub) containing the names of those who subscribed to get Eliot out of Lloyds Bank, and a letter to I. A. Richards of which there was no copy.

VALERIE ELIOT,  
c/o Faber and Faber, 3 Queen Square, London WC1.

Sir, – I have just returned from abroad and have read through the comment and correspondence in the *TLS* about Michael Hastings's play, *Tom and Viv*.

Various statements have been made that are misleading and inaccurate about the T. S. Eliot material in the Faber archive, covering his work in the firm from 1925 until his death in 1965. This material is, as everyone would expect, an extensive archive in its own right, of great value to anyone interested in publishing, as well as to scholars concerned with Eliot's own writings. For the past ten years, since she completed her widely praised facsimile of *The Waste Land*, Mrs Eliot has been working full-time on an edition of the Eliot letters, which will appear eventually in four volumes. The manuscript of the first volume, covering the period up to 1926, is due to be delivered to us in June. Not only has Mrs Eliot been devoting herself to this major undertaking but she has also found time – I must not say how – to answer hundreds of letters a year from students and scholars who have written to her for help and advice about T. S. Eliot's work.

I feel it is naive to imagine that any great literary estate would provide access to such archival material to anyone who wished to use it to write a play, or indeed an unauthorized biography. It has to be said also that since the Faber archive naturally reflects Eliot's years as a director of the firm it is concerned with his professional life as a writer, editor and publisher, not with his personal life. When the Eliot material is returned in due course to the Faber archive, as it will be when Mrs Eliot has finished studying it, it will have been made fully and richer as a result of her researches and many editions she has made to it. At that time more access will be allowed than is presently given.

From a purely commercial point of view I am distressed that Mrs Eliot has had to spend the last month not only in correcting errors of fact in your columns and elsewhere, but has also been subjected to numerous press inquiries and requests for interviews. All this has meant that she has not been able to get on with her editorial work, and so achieve the very thing that everybody is clamouring for – the publication of her edition of her husband's correspondence.

We have now asked her – in the nicest possible way – if she would concentrate entirely on the letters. If anybody has any further questions or matters to discuss about the Faber/Eliot archive, perhaps they would be kind enough – in the interests of us all – to direct themselves to me.

MATTHEW EVANS,  
Faber and Faber, 3 Queen Square, London WC1.

Sir, – It is amusing that Peter Redgrove (Letters, February 17), in attempting to deflect and disqualify *The Waste Land*, should use against it precisely the same weapons that T. S. Eliot had himself employed in 1919 to defuse *Hamlet*. If the poem had its root in the author's "sexual distress", Redgrove suggests, we can all breathe again. *Hamlet* for Eliot was an artistic failure because it was written under the compulsion of some nameless and horrible personal experience. Clearly, Rebecca West's view that critics continually misinterpret *Hamlet* because they will not face the bleak truths it presents can be extended further.

PHILIP EDWARDS,  
12 South Bank, Oxton, Birkenhead, Merseyside.

Sir, – Michael Hastings (Letters, February 17) complains that I would not help him with his play, *Tom and Viv*. To set the record straight, my aunt, the late Mary Trevelyan, kept a diary of her friendship with T. S. Eliot and also received many letters from him. The letters are in the Houghton Library at Harvard University and during my aunt's lifetime could be made available to researchers with her permission or that of her representatives. This I believe still to be the case: I am not aware that Mr Hastings made any efforts to see them. The diary is now in my possession, and it was this that Mr Hastings asked to see, or to have information from. The diary covers the years 1938 to 1957 and contains only a few references to Eliot's first marriage; I felt that I had little to offer Mr Hastings and preferred not to make it available to him, chiefly because in due course I hope to publish it. I am indeed "an author" and he might surely have guessed that sheer self-interest might play a part in some people's reluctance to help him. The diary is in my opinion a very readable and informative account of Eliot in his later years and I had no particular wish that its plums should be picked by Mr Hastings.

I am waiting to publish it until Mrs Eliot has issued the volume of her husband's letters which covers the years dealt with by the diary. The diary itself contains transcripts of a large number of Eliot's letters to my aunt and Mrs Eliot has agreed that I can publish these in due course when her own selection of letters covering the period has appeared in print. In return she has been given access to the originals deposited by my aunt at Harvard. This is the extent of my supposed collusion with Mrs Eliot, whatever Mr Hastings may think I said to him on the telephone several years ago.

I am not sure why Mr Hastings thinks it hypocritical of me to quote from my aunt's diary when reviewing the play on *Kaleidoscope*. I merely used a few lines from it to describe Eliot's character in general terms. My aunt was more fond of Eliot than Mr Hastings seems to be.

HUMPHREY CARPENTER,  
6 Parndon Road, Oxford.

## The Rosenberg Case

Sir, – Michael Meeropol, in his criticism (Letters, February 10) of my review of *The Rosenberg File*, raises several points, all of which might be discussed at great length, and perhaps should be. However, I trust that you, and he, and your readers, will forgive me if I touch on them as briefly as possible, except on one matter, where reflection has convinced me that I blundered.

I see no hope that Mr Meeropol and I will ever agree about the general reliability of the testimony of Harry Gold and David Greenglass. I find the attempts to discredit their evidence substantially unconvincing, and stick to my original remark that "a broad, unchallengeable trail led from Klaus Fuchs, via his 'courier', Harry Gold, to David Greenglass." I also accept Greenglass's testimony against his brother-in-law. I may be mistaken; but the best way for your readers to settle their minds on the point is to read both *The Rosenberg File* (by Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton) and *Invitation To An Inquest* (by Walter and Miriam Schneir).

In short, I stand by my review; except that I now see that on one point it was muddled and potentially misleading. I trust that nobody, reading it, would get the impression that I believed Ethel Rosenberg to have been rightly arrested, tried and executed. Her part in her husband's activities, if any, can only be guessed at. As I tried to make clear in my review, she was apparently the victim of unscrupulous dealings by the FBI and general political hysteria (Radosh and Milton make the necessary points very forcibly). Yet I unintentionally engaged in *suggestio falsi* by writing "it remains as impossible to believe that Greenglass would have framed his sister as a jury found it in 1981." Mr Meeropol was quite right to protest, though he and I still differ as to what actually happened.

I did not mean to imply that, because Ethel Rosenberg was not framed, she must have been guilty as charged. The point I was trying to establish was that Greenglass's evidence against Julius Rosenberg was on the whole reliable; and one consideration supporting this view is that Greenglass could hardly incriminate Julius without putting his own sister, Ethel, at risk. Would he do so without good reason? In the event it was his and Ruth Greenglass's highly dubious testimony about Ethel – testimony (I follow Radosh and Milton) all too probably manipulated out of them by the FBI – which was used to convict her: a shocking business. But it really is not contentious, as between Mr Meeropol and me. Where we differ is as to the question of his father's guilt or innocence; or, if he prefers, as to how far the FBI went in its manipulation. To my mind the evidence of David Greenglass about the Rosenberg spy ring and his own activities as part of it rings true.

One last point: because of the absence of footnotes, I tried to confine my discussion of *The Rosenberg File* as much as possible to matters which did not turn on the authors' handling of FBI documents. This was defensible because, as I may have failed to make clear, the book is much more than a simple report on the archive. It is the best and fullest account of the Rosenberg tragedy yet written.

HUGH BROGAN,  
Department of History, University of Essex,  
Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex.

## 'Pontiff'

Sir, – An acquaintance has sent me your issue of December 16, 1983, containing an article by Igor Vinogradoff entitled "Foul Play in the Vatican".

In it Mr Vinogradoff mentions that in a book called *Pontiff*, by Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan-Witts, I am cited as a witness for a mysterious story regarding the death of Pope John Paul I and involving some alleged plot by the KGB.

I want to inform you that as far as I can remember I have never met either of these authors, and that I consider linking the sudden death of the Pope to the KGB as absurd as to make me greatly regret being mentioned in this matter. I am glad to note that Mr Vinogradoff himself considers it improbable that I should have supplied any such information to the authors of *Pontiff*. Their allegation is in fact utterly stupid, and so I cannot feel flattered by their complimentary reference to me as "an intellectual giant".

FRANZ, CARL KONIG,  
Vienna.

*The Black Death* by Robert S. Gottfried is published in the UK by Robert Hale, not Collier Macmillan, as stated in our issue of January 13.

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Clarendon Press Publication 1 March

## Oxford University Press



# COMMENTARY

## Beyond the Mexique Bay

Claude Rawson

JOHN DRYDEN and HENRY PURCELL  
The Indian Queen  
Oxford Playhouse

*The Indian Queen*, by Dryden and his brother-in-law Sir Robert Howard, was first performed in January 1663/4, with great success. Pepys reports "the street full of coaches" outside the theatre. Both he and Evelyn recorded their admiration. The production was spectacular, and Aphra Behn contributed some "glorious Wreaths" of feathers from Surinam to the exotic costumery. It was Dryden's first heroic play and helped to establish the fashion for the genre. The play itself continued to be produced from time to time (Pepys saw it again in 1668), but was superseded by an operatic version in 1695. It is this which the Oxford University Opera Club, under the sensitive direction of Stephen Wall, performed at the Oxford Playhouse on February 7 to 11.

The composer was Henry Purcell, with a final hymeneal masque set by his brother Daniel: both words and music were thus (by an odd coincidence) fraternal co-productions. It is one of Purcell's loveliest works, and belongs to the last year of his life, a brilliantly productive period which included the music for several other plays and operas (notably the song "From rosy bowers", and the score for *The Tempest*). The story is a fictitious romance about Montezuma before he became Emperor of Mexico. In Dryden's "sequel", *The Indian Emperour*, he is shown as the ruler later conquered by the Spaniards, but here he is general to the Inca of Peru, whom he has helped to defeat the Mexicans. He loves the Inca's daughter Orazia, and, when refused her hand, crosses to the Mexican camp, where the (young) Mexican Queen Zempolla falls in love with him. His now helps the Mexicans to defeat the Peruvians and the Inca and his daughter become prisoners. After many gyrations of erotic sentiment and political intrigue, it turns out that Montezuma is the legitimate Emperor of Mexico anyway, and thus sufficiently high-born for Orazia. Things settle happily, with the more inconvenient personages eliminated by stabbing, some of it self-inflicted. The verse has the finesse and brilliance of thick porridge sprinkled with phosphorescent confetti. On this, Purcell wrought his magic.

The work is a "seal-opera", with overtures,

## The periodicals, 11: Stand

Neil Corcoran

JON SILKIN and others (Editors)  
Stand  
Winter 1983/84. Volume 25, no 1.  
80pp. 95p. Subscriptions £5 from 179  
Wingrove Road, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne.

In an editorial of 1962, Jon Silkin said that he had started *Stand* ten years earlier "because I felt then, as now, that I lived in a society marked by its casual indifference to the individual and his suffering"; and the relation between writing and society, between a poet's and a poet's, has always marked the magazine with a particular urgency of engagement, just as Silkin's own report, gnarled, contortedly, rugged prose style – in, for instance, his attempt to analyse the relationship between image and discourse in the introduction to the selection from *Stand* published as *Poetry after*.

*Committed individual* in 1973, he seemed the magazine's atmosphere and nourishment. What one might think of, then, as the anxiety of engagement has given *Stand* its character: generous to American writing, and to European and Third World literatures in translation, always open to contributions from unknowns, is interested in the short story as in poetry, promoting the reputations of English writers committed in as different and sometimes as oblique ways as Silkin himself, Roy Fisher, Geoffrey Hill, and Tony Harrison. If the anxiety and rigour have occasionally made the journal seem "formidably" non-orthodox,

songs and choral pieces. The main characters have no singing to do. For those unused to such hybrid compositions, common in the seventeenth century, an odd effect is to see a heroine on centre-stage, seemingly waiting, as the orchestra plays, for a cue to sing an aria which never materializes. The main dialogue is spoken not sung, which leaves us with stretches of undiluted Dryden-Howard irradiated from time to time by interludes of Purcellian splendour. An unusual exception is the prologue, a dialogue between an Amerindian boy and girl, which is fully and elaborately set to music. The text prophesies that the new world "shall be subdu'd by one more old" (a common way of describing the exploits of the conquistadors) and looks to the future as protective and benign: an irony oddly inappropriate to *The Indian Queen*, which treats of wars between Mexicans and Peruvians with no Spaniards in sight. Dryden's stage-direction called for "a soft Air", intended to evoke an Amerindian Arcadia (Davenant, Dryden's predecessor in Amerindian opera, required "a wild Ayre suitable to the Region" in such contexts). Purcell offered instead a charming lyrical staidness, delightfully cavalier about local colour. "For all the music tells us", as Westrup says, "the action might be taking place in St James's Park."

The great Purcellian set-pieces are the masque with Fame and Envy in Act II (brilliantly executed in this production, with Matthew Quinn especially strong as Envy, singing "What flattering noise is this"; the dream-interpreting scene in Act III with the High Priest Ismeron delivering "Ye twice ten hundred deaths" ("the best piece of recitative in our language", according to Burney); and a sacrifice scene at the Temple of the Sun in Act V. The various choral parts, and the duet "Ah! how happy are we", are attractively rendered by the Oxford cast, as is Daniel Purcell's somewhat inferior Hymen masque, some of which is here retained, for reasons of "general structure".

Pepys thought the pre-Purcellian play "good but spoiled with the Ryme, which breaks the sense". The Oxford actors labour not to break the sense, and not to lose the rhyme. The result is a strenuous clarity of enunciation, and an oddly unvarying gravity of utterance. The cut and thrust of repartee, the oscillations and reversals of passion, the proto-Racinean (well, sub-Racinean) nuances of tormented eroticism, the stirrings of heroic eloquence, all tend

*Stand* has nevertheless long since earned its right to recognition for its scrupulous standards of discrimination, its prompting of insular or monoglot English readers in the direction of important foreign work, and its contribution to a definition and re-definition of "the culture" resistant, in its Northern base, to the presumptions of the metropolises.

The current issue publishes the four winners of a short story competition judged by Penelope Mortimer and Sid Chaplin. The stories are rather conventional in form and perhaps a bit easy in their material – all taking what Frank O'Connor thought characteristic of the genre, the "lonely voice" of the isolated individual, to an extreme point: an urban terrorist, veteran of Vietnam, who wears a gas-mask to keep out the "Killer Enzymes", and "Radio Carbons" of contemporary American Society; a man dying of something that "begins with nephritis and goes on from there"; a widow with a mentally handicapped daughter; an American Indian girl in a slum community trying to come to terms with the horrifying past of a South American neighbour. I liked most the story which came second, "Nephritis", by Adrian Mithras. It has an unhurried ease of ironic understatements which reminded me a little of Paul Muldoon's poetry: the French woman encountered on holiday "who had known two people at the Sorbonne"; the appalling monk who advises the dying man that death, if considered "an experience of growth", may become "a growth in experience".

Of the poems in the issue Anne Stevenson's weirdly compelling "Where the Animals Go"

to sound like an elocution class in slow motion. The constraints of the rhymed couplet in what Dryden called "serious plays" have always been a problem for actors and playwrights. The risks of monotony, for example, were considered in Dryden's own *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (indeed he disputed with Howard on such questions). Cibber praised the actor Sandford in "Dryden's plays of Rhime" because "he as little as possible gutted the Ear with the Jingle of it; rather chusing, when the sense would permit him, to lose it, than to value it". Another solution might be to play for laughs: a risky expedient, sometimes resorted to in scenes of "heroical *Rhodomontade*", but calling for nice judgment as to the exact degree of ridicule necessary to save the situation without subverting the play. There doesn't seem to be a lot of playing for laughs in the Oxford production, though it gets them once or twice in the scene where Zempolla wrestles with her awakening love for Montezuma, as turbulent changes of mood are registered in this production's chosen style of stately expository flatness. Lucy Maycock, as the Indian Queen, seems to me, of all the non-singing parts, to have the most command over the play's intractable idiom, and she may be signalling that she is having her bit of fun. She keeps it properly in check, but I suspect that this production was not devised to be hospitable to derision.

Among the other performers, David Roberts as Montezuma and Elizabeth Woodgate as Orazia grow in assurance as the performance progresses. (The opening scenes were particularly stiff on the night I was there.) The actor who plays Traxalla, Zempolla's general, is manifestly a nicer person than the character he is portraying. The old Inca, father of Orazia, looks younger than his daughter, and immensely tall, like someone seconded from the basketball team especially to do verse-recitations from a great height. He and the young Acacis battle honourably with the inelasticity of the medium, but their relative unsuccess makes me wonder whether a bolder and more unbuttoned style of production (giving freer vent to a heroic strain which is both enjoyed in its own right and also seen as coming close to courting laughter) might not work better. But the risks of failure would have been greater, and Stephen Wall was probably right not to take them. The costumes and décor have a restrained exoticism that goes well with the mood of the production, and the orchestra plays agreeably, with occasional falterings.

about an imagined heaven, is outstanding, the delicate rhythmic poised complementing the imagistic precision – "They rise like steam, like cumulus, crowding in together, / each into the haunches of its archetype", a poem profitably unsure whether it's written in humour or in terror – as if Rupert Brooke's "Heaven" had been re-written by Ted Hughes.

This issue of *Stand* concludes where many do, with one of Terry Eagleton's poetry reviews. A regular and salient feature of the journal, these reviews are always a reason for looking at it. They manage, very deftly and often very wittily, to locate the given texts within a context of political generalization which visibly establishes criteria of literary judgment. In a recent issue, Eagleton describes, with elegant lucidity, how the ideological strain hurts two lines of Tom Paulin's "Desertmartin"; and in the current issue he very interestingly makes it a criterion of value in poems written about working-class communities how deeply the poet inscribes in the poem the ironic distance between self-as-writer and the evoked community. He doesn't mention Tony Harrison in this context, but clearly his remarks are relevant to the *Corvidae* sequence; and one might think that in Eagleton's searching and challenging reviews, and in Harrison's recent poetry, Jon Silkin's original intentions for *Stand* find their most appropriate realization. It is a pity that Eagleton ends this piece with a smack at Carcanet, which he clearly found irredeemable. It did, after all, once publish Silkin, and on at least one occasion, an essay by Eagleton himself.

*Revis* is published by Methuen (80pp. £1.95; 0 413 518 108), as is Michael Wilcox's *Levi*, reviewed in the TLS of March 11, 1983 (38pp. £1.95; 0 413 53830 3).

## Meretricious

Stephen Pickles

MICHAEL WILCOX  
Rents  
Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith

It seems appropriate enough to use a series of episodic encounters to dramatize the lives of two male prostitutes living in Edinburgh; but Michael Wilcox has felt it necessary to give his play *Rents* a shape – the wrong shape altogether. He acknowledges the source of *Rents* in documentary tapes, and indeed the play would have been more suited to the radio than to the stage just because the material is rather thin on the ground beyond its occasional comic contrivances.

Richard is doing some temporary teaching work in the city. Phil, one of the rent-boys, is studying drama at the same college. They meet, and after seeing a Fassbinder film together become friends. Phil needs many things – money, friends, lackeys, help with his portrayal of Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot* – and shares a flat with Robert, whom he uses instinctively, pleading like a child for another shop-lifting expedition. Robert dislikes Richard when Phil brings him home, but eventually they become good friends. Eddie, a loudish drunken Scot, dressed like a rocker and built like a water-bed, wanders on every now and then to make us laugh, and wreak his vengeance on the "puifs". To knit him into the play's shape, Wilcox gives him a woman – Norma, whom we never see, but who lives in sin with Phil's mother. These two characters are called Mop and Bucket, and their *raison d'être* seems to be purely anecdotal. Another character we never see is Chateau Charles, a cottaging queen with a penchant for young boys and a remarkable technique and success rate. It is a shame he never appears, but not surprising: from what we hear of him he would steal the thinly fleshed-out show. Things end badly. Richard goes back to Newcastle feeling sorry to have lost Robert. Eddie cuts his hand in a fight with Spider the pimp and takes a first-class seat to London where he hopes to become a Soho bouncer. Robert leaves Phil to his dream of owning a chain of rent-boys.

One of the play's few qualities is that it is almost never sentimental. Nor does it make great play of homosexuality: it aims to be an urban drama, more about decay and soullessness than about sodomy in public lavatories. Stevan Rinkus and Douglas Sannachan give creditable performances as the boys. Kenny Ireland as Eddie is marvellously cast and rises to his too frequent opportunities. Paul Jesson is entirely credible and rather charming as a lecturer. For the smaller parts, Robert McIntosh is economic and wholly adaptable as them all. It is Wilcox, and to some extent William Gaskill, the director, who fall short. Sex and money have always been an interesting subject, and a story concerning male whores has considerable potential. But why make one of them a drama student, and subject us to relevant lines from *Godot* – as if there had to be some kind of heady subtext to the tale? The clever and well-observed Richard is a record collector, which allows Wilcox to offer up snapshots of Mozart, Bruckner and Callas. This introduces a different and more sophisticated kind of emotion to the play, which all the other characters lack but which is entirely irrelevant to this particular game. It is not good enough to give Phil lines like "I need you", in the hope that we will appreciate his predicament. Nor does the sight of naked boys having an obligatory conversation about scabies and other doses provide an illuminating moment of comedy. The after-taste of the jokes needs much more consideration by the playwright and director. Rent-boys are fascinating because they are often heterosexual, and regard their clients with contempt. Despite a certain professional hardness, these two are too romantic and gay for us to feel that any revealing examination of a way of life has taken place.

*Rents* is published by Methuen (80pp. £1.95; 0 413 518 108), as is Michael Wilcox's *Levi*, reviewed in the TLS of March 11, 1983 (38pp. £1.95; 0 413 53830 3).

## Ruff and tumbrel

Mosco Carner

UMBERTO GIORDANO  
Andrea Chénier  
Royal Opera House

Giordano's name was in bad odour after the production in 1892 of *Mala Vita*, his opera set in Naples during the latter half of the nineteenth century. In it the twenty-five-year-old composer sought to outdo Mascagni in the verismo of his *Cavalleria rusticana* by choosing a subject in which adultery, prostitution and mental illness are closely interwoven. The story shocked the Italian public, but the music was found very promising. By the time Giordano came to write *Andrea Chénier* (1896), he had abjured the "slice of life" approach of the Young Italian School as well as fulfilling his early promise. The opera is certainly his most successful work and on account of its highly rewarding title role was a favourite with great tenors like Caruso, Gigli and Lauri-Volpi. Italian critics, however, consider Giordano's much later *La Cena delle beffe* and *Il Re* to be of superior musical quality, a judgment with which I concur.

The librettist of *Chénier* was Luigi Illica, a writer greatly in demand at the turn of the last century, with some thirty libretti to his name, and outside Italy best known as one of the two collaborators of Puccini's three most popular operas. For Giordano's libretto Illica took a leaf out of Sardou, the master of boulevard dramas (hence Shaw's contemptuous "Sardoodledom"), by choosing a subject with an authentic historical background – the French

Revolution leading up to the Terror – against which is played out the love story of the poet André Chénier and Madeleine de Coigny. The general drift of Illica's action broadly conforms to historical facts. The real Chénier did write a farewell poem ("Comme un dernier rayon") in prison while awaiting execution; and there was a tribune named Mouriez who desired the same aristocratic girl as the poet. In the opera Mouriez becomes Gérard, whose third-act scene with Maddalena di Coigny (who offers herself to him in exchange for Chénier's life) bears strong resemblance to that of Scarpia and Tosca in Act II of the Puccini opera. But, unlike the Roman chief of police, the French tribune is a self-divided character torn between a generous idealism and uncontrollable sensuality, a dichotomy that dictates his behaviour towards the two lovers. Gérard's contradictory emotions are put across to splendid dramatic effect in his long monologue "Nemico della patria" of Act III. The opera ends with a *Liebestod*, not *à la Tristan* but in the manner of *Aida*, in which at the end Radames and the heroine bid farewell to life as do Chénier and Maddalena. It is the similarity in situation and mood as well as Giordano's ethereal-sounding harp passages that at once recall the final duet in the Verdi opera.

Giordano's advice to young composers was: "Find a good song and build an opera around it!" If he really believed in his cynical view of dramatic composition, he certainly did not follow it himself – least of all in *Chénier*, in which there are four or five "good songs" and, equally important, they are firmly anchored in a coherent dramatic structure. Giordano shows his mettle as a born opera composer in his

eloquent response to Illica's deft juxtaposition of highly dramatic scenes with others of a marked lyrical order. Where verismo rears its head is in those sudden, excessive outbursts of white-hot passion in the vocal writing for the two male antagonists. Generally speaking, there is a muscular quality to the music largely due to Giordano's pre-eminently diatonic melody and harmony; "weakening" chromatics are rarely encountered.

After over half a century and one or two postponements Covent Garden has at last staged the opera in a production by Michael Hampe brought over from Cologne. Hampe follows the composer's intention to the letter, taking his cues not only from the text but, evidently, from the music too. The sets conceived by Ezio Frigerio and executed by William Orlandi are not more than adequate, but the costumes (Franca Squarciapino) vividly conform to the time of action.

Chénier is José Carreras, who promises to become the new favourite among present-day front-rank tenors. He is in full control of his powerful lyrical voice, singing throughout with great ardour and a perfect *legato*. Rosalind Plowright as his Maddalena produces tone of alluring warmth and dramatic thrust, but as yet lacks the expressive flexibility the role demands. Bernd Weikl, with his commanding baritone, draws an imposing portrayal of the quasi-villain Gérard and proves his musicality in exemplary phrasing. Of the minor roles in this well-chosen cast Cynthia Buchanan stands out for a neat cameo of the Mulatto girl, Bersi, while Anny Schlemm obtains an astonishingly impressive effect from her brief appearance as the blind old Madelon offering her grandson to fight for the Revolution – a typical touch of Illica's, who excelled in the invention of picturesque detail for enlivening a scene. The orchestral playing under Richard Armstrong leaves nothing to be desired in idiomatic delivery of this effective but not very subtle score.

## Motoring mannequins

Peter Kemp

ROSAMOND LEHMANN  
The Weather in the Streets  
BBC2

Tweeds and taffetas, flannels and furs, frock coats, evening dresses, blazers, bowlers, berets, snoods and toques and Tyrolean hats: clothes are strewn in armfuls around Rosamond Lehmann's *The Weather in the Streets*. Constantly – fingering textures, noting lifts – the novel demonstrates the way outfits can serve as camouflage or uniform. In it, people's appearances are always carefully scrutinized, for the book is deeply interested in façades. Its characters, we're frequently reminded, consist of two very different layers: social carapace and private self. At one point, the heroine, Olivia, rebukes herself for seeing only a friend's "marionette surface" and not the human vulnerability behind it. Olivia herself is very much a two-sided personality – as the novel emphasizes by its idiosyncratic narrative technique, jumping, in a way that instructively jolts awareness, between first and third-person presentation of her.

This device could have been incorporated into Julian Mitchell's television adaptation of the book by the use of a voice-over to convey Olivia's unspoken reactions alongside those she publicly reveals. That it wasn't seemed symptomatic of a pervading tendency to lop and simplify. In this film, people's personalities were wafer-thin, devoid of the chunky complexity, engrained with knotty contradictions, with which the novel endows them. The sense of differing aspects of a personality straining against each other was lost – as was the book's corresponding concern with the intermingling of very disparate social worlds.

Rosamond Lehmann's Olivia is a Jean Rhys-like figure, socially and financially embarrassed. But the film – after a likely-looking opening with her fining out her stockings at a dinner sink – gave little indication of this. The tensions between bohemian Olivia and her no-nonsense mother were omitted; the contrast with conforming Kate – the sensible sister who preferred because she's made "a suitable marriage with easy motoring distance" – was blurred by the casting of chic-seeming Joanna Lumley in that part. Olivia, inaccurately placed in her parents' house. Even

more misleading, she seemed in her element when dining with the stately, affluent Spencers, whereas, in the novel, she's presented as an apprehensive misfit there, a target for veiled needling when the women talk in the drawing-room over their embroidery frames. "Can they sniff out an alien upon this hearth?" Olivia nervously wonders. "Or is it disguise enough, simply to be here, in evening dress?"

Juxtaposition of aristocratic respectability and artistic raffishness is central to the book, whose love-affair between Olivia and Rollo Spencer sets Fitzrovia and Mayfair cheek by jowl. But, apart from a stagily arty party – apparently being thrown in a mansion – there were few signs of Olivia's bohemian background. Whereas the novel depicts her as drawn into a vacuum by an affair that can't be openly acknowledged – cut off behind "the glass casing" of her artificial situation from the real world, "the weather in the streets" – the film, leaving a void where Olivia's artistic milieu should be, gave the impression that the affair rescued her from a vacuum.

There were other ways in which the book was misrepresented. Some aspects of it were too garishly treated; Marigold's ambiguous talk of lesbianism, emerging from a lengthy conversation in the book, was here turned into an abrupt verbal pounce; Olivia's abortion took place luridly on screen. Her affair with Rollo, however, was processed into something far more softly idyllic than the novel offers: gleaming period cars were wheeled out for romantic drives through picture-postcard scenery; meadows rippled on the screen as music thrilled and throbbled over the soundtrack.

Amid the moody muzak and visual candy-floss, some performances still managed to suggest the novel's sharper flavour. Michael York – speech as meticulously clipped as his moustache – was a convincingly conservative philanthropist, physically exuberant but shyling from emotional directness, as unquestioningly flitting into the conventions of his class as into his Savile Row suits. Rosalind Ayres gave an effectively mannered portrayal of highly artificial Elty. Faith Brook made a formidably graceful Lady Spencer. And Holly de Jong, her mouth a carmine pout of jutting, sensual dissatisfaction, was an exuberantly unstable Marigold. With rich performances like these on hand, it seemed particularly unfortunate that the script should have settled for so impoverished a version of the novel.

# COMMENTARY

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 162

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than March 16. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct – in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 162" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on March 23.

1 The day is now well advanced. And yet it is perhaps a little soon for my song. To sing too soon is fatal. I always find. On the other hand it is possible to leave it too late.

2 "I may sing now", he replied, and did.  
His thin voice rose, and gave out one sound after another. At times there seemed rhythm, at times there was an illusion of a Western melody. But the ear, baffled repeatedly, soon lost any clue, and wandered in a maze of noises, none harsh or unpleasant, none intelligible.

3 The tune said, more or less, how Eve, gathering her robes about her, stands reluctant still to let her dewy mantle fall. The herded flocks, the tune continued, in peace repose.

Competition No 158

Winner: John MacInerney

Answers:

1 I spent Christmas at Boston. It was deep in snow, and everything we touched gave us an electric shock. Flames, blue and livid, sprang from keyholes when keys were put into them. David, touching Osbert's forehead to show him where he had a smut, received (and communicated) such a shock that his left arm was useless for the rest of the day, and Osbert gave a piercing howl. I touched nothing excepting through the medium of a glove.

Edith Sitwell, letter to John Lehmann, January 6, 1949.

2 It was a quiet, sultry summer, the summer they electrocuted the Rosenbergs, and I didn't know what I was doing in New York. I'm stupid about executions. . . . It had nothing to do with me, but I couldn't help wondering what it would be like, being burned alive all along your nerves.

Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*, chapter 1.

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# Equivocations of the Chief

Roy Foster

J. P. O'CARROLL and JOHN A. MURPHY

(Editors)

De Valera and His Times

208pp. Cork University Press. IR£15.

0902561261

JOHN MCCOLGAN

British Policy and the Irish Administration

1920-22

178pp. George Allen and Unwin. £10.

004941013

SHEILA LAWLER

Britain and Ireland 1914-23

291pp. Gill and Macmillan. £20.

038920409

"Everything begins with mysticism and ends with politics." Péguy's aphorism could have been coined for Eamon de Valera, and indeed for the history of the twentieth-century Irish state. From a shadowy Irish-American background, the austere intellectual (mathematician and Gaelic zealot) emerged, via the 1916 Rising, and captured the leadership of Sinn Féin; yet in the Anglo-Irish War and the ensuing Treaty negotiations he stayed in the background while more concrete figures like Collins and Griffith took practical initiatives to recast the Irish question. Rejecting the compromise of the Irish Free State, de Valera opted for recession from old allies, and a civil war fought on the issue of the oath of allegiance (not the partition of the country). Giving up the hopeless fight, in 1926 he left his intransigent followers in the wilderness and magically re-entered constitutional politics by taking his place at the head of Fianna Fáil, a new party operating within a political system whose legality he denied. By verbal metamorphosis, he reconstructed Anglo-Irish relations into a state of "external association" which he could accept, and settled down to being the Kenyatta of his people. All that was left was the unfinished business of the North, and that, he said, was "a thing of the mind only".

The strange Republic over which he presided had followed a similar path, from mystic beginnings to pragmatic power-broking. In political practice as in the founder's life, pious intransigence was replaced by sophisticated compromise. This was one reason why the Republic and Ulster viewed each other with mutual suspicion; for in the North murderous mysticism showed no sign of giving way to pragmatism. But through their acceptance of limitations in economic and foreign affairs, politicians in the Republic were able to construct the most remarkably stable post-colonial democratic state of modern times: a process also aided by covert continuities from the years of British rule, and by the national fair for presenting reformed aspirations as inspirational goals. In all these processes, the key figure was de Valera. The works under review implicitly raise the vexed question of his achievements and his qualities at every turn.

The question of his achievement will always be dubious, because he was the supreme shaman-figure of modern Irish history. An essay in *De Valera and His Times*, the uneven collection edited by J. P. O'Carroll and John A. Murphy, attempts to define his charisma, and his employment of myth and symbol, by conveying the sense of a holy mission, the claimed rejection of the majority vote for the Treaty, the Rousseauist right to force a people to be free. But to occupy this position, he needed mastery skills of casuistry: for the people did not always come up to de Valera's expectations. The ambivalence of reactions to the 1916 Rising is brilliantly evoked by David Fitzpatrick in the same collection; failure was part of the charm, as with Arnold's Celts who always went out to battle and always fell. But de Valera managed to have it both ways, by first capitalizing on the aura of failure, and then, by entering the Free State framework, not only accepting half a loaf but settling down to consume it over an unconscionably long time.

Along the way he had to face a good many trials. No essay in *De Valera and His Times* really explores his obscure childhood, or his intellectual biography: though John Bowman provides an elegant dissection of the fiction largely due to him. He makes the false observation that de Valera himself worked "in external association" with his biographers. Lancelotti

and O'Neill, a less hagiographical study must await the unrestricted opening of the de Valera archives in 1985, and the completion of work currently in progress. Until then, speculation about the reasons for the commutation of his death sentence in 1916, his relations with Collins, and even the contents of his birth certificate, will remain.

The mysteriousness inseparable from his name points up de Valera's indebtedness to the Parnellite tradition of leadership – not only in the balancing act between constitutional and revolutionary themes, but also in the style of his politics. When Churchill accused him of sabotaging Britain's war effort by his neutral stance, de Valera's contemptuous answer repeated Parnell's reaction to the Pigott forgeries and the Special Commission – it was not for him to be judged by England. Such tactics paid handsome dividends. Both men were called "the Chief"; and when John A. Murphy describes the props of de Valera's stage-management, the sense of *déjà vu* is inescapable. "The long black cloak with the silver clasp, the theatrical epiphany on horseback, the aura of enigma, the austerity and even slight exorcism – all was intended to convey the overwhelming sense of destiny..."



De Valera on his return to Dublin after attending the Truce Conference, July 1921.

Beneath the cloak, what was he conjuring? To those of the Treaty tradition his greatest sin must always be his fomenting of civil war; but this, like so much else about the period, is being subjected to revision. John McCollan's study of *British Policy and the Irish Administration* – scrupulous, slightly acid and impartial throughout – finds that de Valera's intransigence was not the vital proximate cause of the outbreak of the hostilities with his old comrades in 1922. Here as elsewhere, British pressure and Collins's agonizingly difficult position as leader of the Treaty forces helped to set events in motion. When one considers the phrasing of the Oath and the offer of Dominion status, however, de Valera's equivocalities loom in the background; Sheila Lawlor's *Britain and Ireland 1914-23* concludes, after painstaking reconstruction, that as late as September 1921 "there was no cause to anticipate that he would be dissatisfied with the terms brought home, and no reason to believe that he did not know what those terms would be". Like Parnell, where he stood on almost any issue remains open to question; unlike Parnell, this was for de Valera an intellectual's prerogative. But few intellectuals followed him.

For those historians unprepared to engage with de Valera's mind, the only alternative is a kind of fideist extenuation, evident in several essays to be found in *De Valera and His Times*. O'Carroll, for instance (who apparently reads as de Valera's phrase of "Wolfe Tone's" and puts much weight on it) essentially argues that de Valera succeeded because his actions happened to coincide with certain precepts of political theory and Raymond James Raymond claims far more for de Valera's economic genius than can be substantiated. There is enough here, however, to make the book an introduction to the man and his age. The ambivalence that marked both could be fruitfully explored in many locations. Fitzpatrick shows an ambivalence in Arnold's Celts, and in the language of Sinn Féin for finishing the vision of a "National Party" which was with the

Tammany methods, class hatreds and intolerance, which soured Irish life, corrupted Parliament, and hustled King Edward into his grave".) Deliberate ambiguity helped de Valera make the transition to constitutional agitation; Brian Farrell's excellent contribution on his political style points out that when founding Fianna Fáil he stressed the usefulness of a name that "defied accurate translation". In the same mode, Ronan Fanning's characteristically elegant dissection of de Valera's relations with the IRA discusses the nomenclature applied by the newly constitutionalist republicans to their erstwhile comrades-in-arms. The IRA had once been referred to, in de Valera's Platonic shorthand, as "the Irish people"; in the late 1920s they became "the Republican section which is not in Fianna Fáil"; by the 1930s, they were "traitors against the state".

To someone of de Valera's calibre these metaphysical difficulties were worthwhile, because state-making was fundamentally more satisfying than puritan withdrawal: all the more because he had very definite ideas about a frugal, rural democracy, eschewing materialism and embracing Catholic social values. Or had he? Work by Dermot Keogh and others has shown that he held the ring against press-

politics during the period of the Rising, War and Treaty, moving from side to side of the Irish Sea; the emphasis is on day-to-day interactions and the unforeseeable nature of the eventual result. De Valera appears once more as a culpable pragmatist rather than an austere perfectionist; "study economics and read *The Prince*", he had advised a political tyro in 1921. But, as Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh points out in a trenchant contribution to *De Valera and His Times*, the social and economic implications of "independence" were never clarified.

Nor, of course, were the implications of partition for what has come to be called "verbal republicanism". As John Bowman has brilliantly shown in *De Valera and the Ulster Question*, this remained the one circle which the old conjuror could not square; and the studies by McCollan and Lawlor return inexorably to the wishful thinking on both sides which obscured the question. Collins's difficulties after the Treaty recur, and the rapid but unspoken acceptance of "southern separatism". McCollan shows the British government's preoccupation with Ulster's position while drafting the Government of Ireland Bill, writing in "Ireland" where the six north-eastern counties were all that really concerned them. Similarly, the pretence of eventual co-operation between North and South did not stop them bending to pressure from Ulster Unionists (inevitable, as Lawlor emphasizes, in the special political circumstances weathered by Lloyd George in 1920). "The British", in McCollan's words, "unable to reconcile the goal of a self-governing united Ireland with the particularism of Unionist Ulster, invented a political fiction which they alluded to as 'voluntary co-operation between North and South' and relied upon it as evidence to the world that they had done all they could to make the Irish agree." Metaphysics again: de Valera himself could not have played it better.

It might have been supposed that the Treaty negotiations would expose the illusion; but, as the same authority astutely remarks, partition enabled the Treaty negotiations to proceed – not the other way round. Sinn Féin missed the importance of the 1920 legislation in transferring services to the north; the mandarins continued quietly to prepare the civil service for devolution and partition. De Valera's constitutional convolutions in the ensuing decades changed nothing of this. While unity deeply preoccupied him, he is recorded as declaring that he would not take it if it meant, for instance, abandoning the restoration of spoken Irish. Nowadays, the price that most citizens of the Republic would deem not worth paying is more likely to be Irish neutrality. Interestingly, de Valera also opted for this priority in 1940, when Churchill apparently offered him a united Ireland in return for entering the war. De Valera's refusal may have been an instance of what he elsewhere called looking into his own heart to find out what the Irish people wanted – a prerogative he was always ready to claim.

What is more surprising, and more impressive, is the number of people who acquiesced in the process throughout his long life in politics. This may be because of the "other" de Valera: the pragmatist beneath the cloak. In *De Valera and the Ulster Question*, Bowman quotes a striking account of the Chief's reactions after the decision was made at a lonely farmhouse in 1923 to abandon military resistance to the Free State.

When the meeting broke up, the Chief of Staff, Liam Lynch and de Valera were walking together down the farm-house where they had come to the agreement when Lynch said: "I wonder what Tom Clarke [the intransigent Fenian leader de Valera supported in 1916] would think of this decision," he said. "He ped in his tracks. 'Tom Clarke is dead', he said. 'He has not our responsibilities. Nobody will ever know what he would do, for this situation did not arise for him. But it has arisen for us and we must face it with our intelligence and conscious of our responsibility'."

On December 14 Seamus Heaney presented the Ewart-Biggs Prize, awarded annually for a work "encouraging peace and understanding between the peoples of Britain and Ireland," to Bowman in Belfast. Showing an Irish poet's acute ear for politics, he read out this passage with an almost unnerving depth of feeling: it expressed a rebellion against the tyranny of the dead. If that message can be read as de Valera's real legacy, the nature of the inheritance he left is duly beginning to be appreciated.

## Prague through Parisian eyes

Roger Scruton

JAROSLAV SEIFERT

An Umbrella from Piccadilly

Translated by Ewald Osers

80pp. London Magazine Editions. £7.95.

090388433

The Casting of Bells

Translated by Paul Jagasich and Tom O'Grady

64pp. The Spirit That Moves Us Press. Morty

Sklar/P.O. Box 1585 Iowa City, Iowa 52240

093037021 X

During the first republic, the Czech poet Jaroslav Seifert was editor of various Communist Party publications, but left the Party in 1919, on perceiving the true character of Gottwald. When the communists seized power in 1948, they lost little time in stamping out surrealism – a movement with which Seifert's work is clearly associated, and which was automatically suspect, on account both of its Western orientation, and of its love of recondite symbols, behind which unwelcome meanings might be concealed. Seifert continued to publish in the official press, since he was popular and had influential connections. It was not until 1950, with the publication of *Píseň o Viktorce* (The Song of Viktorka), that he fell properly out of favour. He still managed to publish officially, owing to the enterprise of a brave publisher, who issued his books with pre-communist date stamps. And in 1956, after the death of Stalin, he was revived, and even given an official position in the Writers' Union. Thereafter he, along with other surrealists, began to gain some control of the "means of communication".

An interesting consequence ensued. Surrealism, until then enormously popular among younger Czech intellectuals, who instinctively love anything that is hated by communists, began to lose its following. The younger generation turned instead to a more spiritual tradition, represented by Vladimír Holan (a friend of Seifert's, vividly evoked in *An Umbrella from Piccadilly*), and Bohuslav Reynek, both of whom were heavily persecuted after 1968. Seifert too fell again into disfavour, having loudly proclaimed, in the wake of the Soviet invasion, that a writer cannot remain silent when the authorities utter nothing but lies. The authorities have ways of disproving such statements; nevertheless, official tolerance of the surrealist idiom continues, and Seifert's poetry has continued to be openly collected and reprinted. In 1977 a new *sanitized* collection appeared – *Morový Sloup* (Plague Column) – which has yet to be translated. This was followed by *An Umbrella from Piccadilly*. Both have now been brought out by official publishing houses, and on his eightieth birthday Seifert was congratulated, not only by *Rude Pravo* (for which he worked in its early days), but even by President Husak.

Seifert is now eighty-two years old, and dying. A pleasing feature of his latest collection – *An Umbrella from Piccadilly* – is the poet's desire to explain that he has no objection. Death is death; and my death is different only in being mine. But this fear too can be quietened with images:

Death soon will kick open the door and enter.  
With startled terror at that minute  
I'll catch my breath  
And forget to breathe again.

The passage is characteristic of Seifert's post-war idiom: unaffected, direct, with no versification beyond what the imagery requires. It continues:

May I not be denied the time  
To move more to kiss the hands  
Of her who patiently and with my steps  
Walked on and on and on.  
I loved them.

The translator – Ewald Osers – writes "and loved me most"; so eliminating the only subtlety contained in that little thought. One can see, even in those literal renderings, how fragile is the structure that Seifert composes, how much he leans on this image alone. In our sense, however, the translator has an easy task; he has to follow the rhythm, metre, and every-thing else of the natural emphasis of the ideas expressed. In another sense, however, the task is not easy; no rhyme, rhythm or movement can be imposed on the reader's interest when (as Seifert does) the plain but nuanced

Czech becomes dead English prose:

He dearly loved the child.  
He shared with him the woman's love  
And he would smile  
Whenever the boy was trying to get hold of  
her nipples.

That is Ewald Osers's line-by-line rendering. The dreadful fourth line is in fact the only one in which Osers departs from a plodding literalness. The Czech verb *lapan* (to snatch) is transformed into the perfective *zlapal*, a word whose use is normally confined to the description of breathing: to snatch at the air, to catch one's breath. It provides Seifert with a bunch of soft syllables expressive of the hungry, kiss-like, implacable snatching of the child, and forms the cadence of an alliterative line full of the sound of a child's liquid breathing: "když chlapec každou chvíli zlapal . . ." – literally, they lost little time in stamping out surrealism – a movement with which Seifert's work is clearly associated, and which was automatically suspect, on account both of its Western orientation, and of its love of recondite symbols, behind which unwelcome meanings might be concealed. Seifert continued to publish in the official press, since he was popular and had influential connections. It was not until 1950, with the publication of *Píseň o Viktorce* (The Song of Viktorka), that he fell properly out of favour. He still managed to publish officially, owing to the enterprise of a brave publisher, who issued his books with pre-communist date stamps. And in 1956, after the death of Stalin, he was revived, and even given an official position in the Writers' Union. Thereafter he, along with other surrealists, began to gain some control of the "means of communication".

The same sense of priorities motivates Paul Jagasich and Tom O'Grady, in their rather more elegant translation of *The Casting of Bells*, a collection published in 1968. Again the English reader is given a version which copies the random arrangement and simple, dignified language of the original. But it flows better, and responds more flexibly to the whimsical nature of Seifert's inspection. Here is a typical example, in which a cliché is just sufficiently brightened by the image that follows, to capture the reader's attention:

## Breaking the mould

George Gömöri

BOGDANA CARPENTER

The Poetic Avant-Garde in Poland, 1918-1939

234pp. University of Washington Press. £18.

029595967

Bogdana Carpenter's book is the first scholarly study in English on the poetic achievement of the Polish avant-garde. Avant-garde trends appeared in Poland some years later than in Italy or Russia and the best Polish writers associated with bold innovation (such as S. I. Witkiewicz or Gombrowicz) were not really part of the movement itself. In poetry, however, the so-called "Cracow Avant-garde" created an alternative model to neo-romanticism and also to the voluble, diffuse "emotional" poetry of the Warsaw group *Skamander*. At the time *Skamander* was vastly more popular than any variant of the avant-garde and this popularity persisted well into the post-war years; it was only in the 1960s (as Mrs Carpenter writes) that "the formal innovations of avant-garde poetry became the common heritage of a wide range of [Polish] poets".

The first two sections of *The Poetic Avant-Garde in Poland* are devoted to Futurism and the Cracow Avant-garde, while the remaining two bear less definite titles such as "Different Solutions" and "The New Voices in Polish Poetry". This arrangement is not inconsistent, as even in the first two sections Carpenter assigns separate chapters to individual poets, and a general description of poetic programmes is followed by sensitively sketched portraits of the people who had created the manifestoes. While all Polish Futurists took something from either Marinetti or Mayakovsky/Khlebnikov, Carpenter rightly stresses not only that which separates them from these foreign models but also how they differ among each other. Clearly, the "Formalist" poet and painter Tytus Czyżewski was a quite different sort of a Futurist from the poet-revolutionary, Bruno Jasieński (who died, incidentally, in 1939 in a labour camp near Vladivostok), and even two poets with such a similar social background as Anatol Stern and Aleksander Wat diverged in the poetic realization of their apparently shared ideals. Polish Futurism was apparently shared ideals, and short-lived movement which never managed to create a poetic school, so its impact on future generations was limited.

What made the influence of the Cracow Avant-garde more lasting was probably its attempt to work out a coherent art theory. There was a difference in age which may have helped – Tadeusz Peiper, the most original of the theoreticians of the Polish avant-garde, was already past thirty when he founded the literary review *Zwrotnica* (The Switch). His constructivism, not so much in awe of the wonders of modern technology as insisting on the special role of the metaphor in the poetic process, made possible a definite "break with the mimetic theory of literature" in Poland. Peiper built his poems from metaphors which had no emotional interrelations, merely intellectual or linguistic ones. This brought his poetry close to seventeenth-century Mannerism and to modern Spanish "ultraism" (he was influenced by Góngora and Huidobro, whom he read in the original). His friend and disciple Julian Przybos, while aiming at a constructivist poetic language, based his poetics on a multiple visualization of his themes. Carpenter devotes her longest chapter to Przybos's poetry and her analysis is meticulously fair, but one suspects that her sympathies lie more with such "different solutions" as those of Jan Brzeczowski and Adam Wazyk who, each in his own way, integrated the surrealist technique of associations into their work.

The evaluation of Józef Czechowicz's poetry which follows the chapter on Wazyk is basically sound, although I might add that in one respect Czechowicz deliberately ignored the canons of the Cracow Avant-garde: he restored musicality to the poem. While the sonnetries of his verse are amply described, it is interesting that in this case Carpenter abandons the diachronic approach used in some previous chapters – Czechowicz's early, heavily avant-garde poems from the collection *Kamień* (Stone, 1927) go unnoticed. And from his last collection the poem "Żal" (Sorrow) could have been used to illustrate the "catastrophist" nature of his poetry better than earlier poems predicting war in sombre though vague metaphors.

It is a pity that in an obvious effort to remain objective Bogdana Carpenter did not make her critical preferences clearer. She seems to be equally appreciative of Czyżewski's typographical experiments and Wat's dabbling in *zauw* poetry, the onomatopoeic concoctions of a Młodziejewicz and Wazyk's "poetic cubism". A little more partiality would have added spice to her conscientious and often impeccably balanced judgments.

Besides, you seldom find out  
That women are really thinking about.  
Their little thoughts elude you  
Just as small birds barely touch the human voice  
when their claws clench the phone lines.

The image, indeed, matters so much to Seifert that he sacrifices everything, even thought, for the sake of it. What he loses in depth and concentration, he gains in charm; and it is not surprising that he has been one of the more popular among modern Czech poets. A severe view of his recent verses would liken them to those of Adrian Henri or Roger McGough. But Seifert is in fact more serious, and more genuine, than that implies.

*The Casting of Bells* is as much occupied with death as is the later volume. But death is not the major theme of either; in both, love is the poet's chief preoccupation – unattainable young love, seen with the intense nostalgia of age, and mingled intricately with the feeling of the poet for his home city of Prague, in which he can no longer wander. (The reason for his confinement has been, however, not house arrest, as Paul Jagasich and Tom O'Grady claim in their introduction, but a game leg.) In one poem Seifert thanks God for providing such a setting for his life; in others he busily remembers his old haunts – the steps to the castle, the river bank, the Lužice seminary, Jan Zrzavý's studio. One piece, perhaps the most charming in the later collection – "Mr Krösing's Top Hat" – is entirely given over to this gentle evocation of a beloved city. The following is typical; the poet begins by McGoughing, but cures himself with a breath of Apollinaire:

Prague was gazing out of all her windows,  
smiling happily  
at herself.

Across the road in the Café Slavia  
Karel Teige had the night before cut up  
some crêpe de chine to make a spring dress  
for young poetry.

Seifert belongs to a school of Czech poets who hoped to cure themselves of Germanic and Austrian influence through a dose of modernism and Paris. The literary ancestors of these verses are Apollinaire (whom Seifert translated), Éluard and Ponge. Their charm is that of surrealism, adapted to the whimsical humour and resigned melancholy which the modern Czech public requires of its poets. Like his contemporaries Teige and Nezval, Seifert sees Prague through Parisian eyes. And, like many a *Pražan*, he finds no language better suited to his experience than that of the surrealists. Whether or not one agrees that Seifert is one of the greatest living Czech poets (an opinion less widespread in his homeland than it used to be), he is certainly one of the most representative, in his life as in his writings. The official approval of his poetry may be an encouraging development. It might also suggest that the authorities have sufficient literary judgment to recognize that a verse ruled by whimsy is so little able to interpret the world as to be unlikely to change it. Perhaps the communists are belatedly realizing how grateful they ought to have been to the French surrealists. If all Czech writers had continued in the more Germanic vein of their forbears – seeking, like the great poets Vrchlický and Březina, to discover a literature of humanity, a cosmopolitan foundation for the Czech national spirit – then there would now be no poetry harmless enough to publish.

## Laughter

Their voices uncontrolled,  
Their sunburned muscles hard  
Against the grey and gold  
Of beach and promenade,  
The local youngsters drift  
Through light that interests  
This boy's abandoned shirt,  
That girl's inventive breasts.

At thirty comes the fear  
That negligence is lost;  
Our bodies start to wear  
Each posture like a cast,  
Discretion brings its cramp  
And dignity its fuss  
To little shifts that vamp  
The once spontaneous.

My children thread and turn  
Through shuttled waves, or dance  
On spindles of the sun  
As bigger tides advance,  
While I remain composed  
In shadow on a chair,  
My adolescence closed,  
My dreams in ill-repair,  
And gracefully resist  
This sudden need to have  
Some reason to exist,  
Some formulary of love.

I hug a can of beer  
And lean towards the light,  
Soft puffs of cloud adhere,  
Taut surfaces invite;  
Against the grey and gold  
Of beach and promenade  
Down steps the sounds unfold,  
Through walls the voices fade  
And smaller talk invests  
And nods and smiles divert  
Those inattentive breasts,  
That white, abandoned shirt.

JOHN EVELL







# Our man in Lambeth

## Dennis Nineham

ROBERT RUNCIE  
Windows onto God  
232pp. SPCK. £6.95.  
0281 040761  
MARGARET DUGGAN  
Runcie: The Making of an Archbishop  
238pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £9.95.  
0340 32340X

The simultaneous appearance of *Windows onto God* and *Runcie: The Making of an Archbishop* naturally prompts reflection on the nature of an Archbishop of Canterbury's task. It is bound to include the pastoral, liturgical and administrative activities that fall to any holder of episcopal office. Robert Runcie's period as Bishop of St Albans left no doubt whatever about his competence at these. What more is to be expected of him now?

He is revealed in Margaret Duggan's biography as, like so many people in public life today, the product of a modest (and not particularly religious) middle-class home, as deeply influenced by his - very distinguished - career as a guards officer during the war, and as very conscious that, despite a first in Greats and a period as a Cambridge don, he has had comparatively little training as a professional theologian. He comes across as an approachable, humane and sensitive man with a strong sense of humour and a nice line in self-deprecating wit, a trait which possibly hides a certain lack of self-confidence - something not to be confused with lack of courage; the citation for his MC is enough to make that clear. Where should a man of such character and background place his main emphasis as Archbishop?

Some, both inside and outside the Church, will expect him, as they expect all archbishops, to speak out in defence of traditional values. If that means putting the authority of the Church unreservedly behind the priorities and values of the *bien pensants* within the Establishment, Dr Runcie rejects the role, and very few will blame him. The Church of England is not the Conservative Party at prayer. He rejects equally emphatically, however, the suggestion that he should confine himself to a purely spiritual role and not get involved in the intricacies of secular affairs. "The cry is heard", he says, that "it is too complicated; it is too political; we do not know all the facts; we shall be at the mercy of the emotional appeal"; but he is not to be put off. Sharing fully the conviction of his predecessor William Temple that religion must be concerned with the total life of society, including economics and politics, he accepts the consequent obligation to "step into highly technical matters". If the expression of Christian insights is to get beyond the level of banal generalities, it must be based on a clear grasp and correct analysis of large amounts of complicated data. Christian commentary if it is to be effective must be well-briefed and well-informed. The lectures on secular topics which occupy just half of *Windows onto God* measure

up very well to that description. What is more, they are humane, judicious and clearly argued, very useful contributions to current discussions of such topics as nuclear war, the Third World, race relations, education and the concept of justice. The Archbishop's thought is not governed by any single political orthodoxy, but there is no mistaking either the insistent demand for a more righteous and compassionate society which runs through what he says, or the deep Christian commitment on which it clearly, if often implicitly, rests.

Dr Runcie obviously feels that what matters is to get things done, and calculates that he will contribute more to the process if his proposals are broadly within the limits of the practicable than if they take the form of what he calls "swashbuckling and colourful" archiepiscopal pronouncements at a high level of generality. Not very many will quarrel with that, and only an occasional ecclesiastical eyebrow is likely to be raised at his determination to rest his proposals on sound argument rather than archiepiscopal authority. "I hope", he says at the beginning of one lecture, "that what I have to say . . . will reach you not because it is being said by an archbishop but because it is true." If an archbishop is to rely on argument rather than authority in this way, he must obviously see to it that the argument is as convincing and watertight as he can make it; and it is possible to deduce from these lectures - what Mrs Duggan's biography confirms - that Dr Runcie has decided to go further than most of his predecessors in inviting experts in various fields to help him with his thinking and the drafting of his pronouncements. Provided the advisers are wisely chosen, that is surely something to be welcomed, and it does not in the least prevent what he says from reflecting and expressing his own personality, with its distinctive combination of earnestness and ironic, self-critical humour.

In the directly religious addresses which make up the other half of the book the trumpet seems to give a more uncertain sound. Some of the items here are charming and beautifully appropriate little pieces such as the sermon on the occasion of the Queen Mother's eightieth birthday, but many address themselves to religious issues and problems of very various sorts, synodical government, for example, ecumenical relations, or the nature of the Resurrection event. Like the lectures, these talks are straightforward, well weighed and carefully set out; and if the views advocated tend to be those we associate with the moderate High Church party of the Church of England, the Archbishop is nevertheless revealed as a man of liberal tendency who glories in Anglican comprehensiveness and roundly declares, "I want no witch hunts."

This tone, however, is not consistently sustained. Dr Runcie, more than once remonstrates rather impatiently with excessively sceptical theologians; in the moral sphere, he feels that we cannot "see homosexual and heterosexual relations as having equal validity" simply on the ground of loyalty to the tradition, while with regard to doctrine he insists that we must "distinguish between the fundamentals

and non-fundamentals of the faith" and stand pat on the former. In one of his Easter sermons he insists dogmatically on the historicity of what is reported in the Gospels without so much as hinting that, or why, he parts company in the matter from a considerable scholarly consensus. In all this, he no doubt has in mind the traditional episcopal role of "guardian of the faith", though we must also allow for his temperamental cautiousness and his obvious desire to demonstrate that there is a distinctive and identifiable Anglican position to his opposite numbers in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches (whose views, incidentally, he is in some danger of taking too seriously; there must be a strict limit to our sacrificing our own convictions in deference to other people's). The Orthodox in particular could be a real brake on healthy developments).

Such an uneasy combination of liberal sentiments and episcopal laying down of the law is familiar enough; can the Archbishop be persuaded to take the matter a further stage? He shows an awareness that there is a problem in this area, but it does not appear to be quite clearly focused. He tells us, for example, that "some degree of doctrinal criticism has to be accepted". Quite apart from the grudging tone and the obvious question who is to decide how much "a certain amount" is, the phraseology perhaps suggests a failure to grasp the full scope of the problem. Serious doctrinal criticism is part of the pursuit of truth, and the pursuit of truth is not something of which we need "some degree" and no more. By the same token the advice to "make up our minds that there are some things we do believe and some things we do not" sounds oddly in a period of rapid cultural and intellectual change; belief is not just a matter of the will and of moral grit. The fact is that galloping, and constantly accelerating, cultural change faces the Churches with a need for radical reassessment.

## Cardinal Standfast

### Alan Webster

BASIL HUME  
To be a Pilgrim: A Spiritual Notebook  
230pp. Slough: St Paul Publications. £7.50 (paperback, £4.25).  
0854392327

Firmly quoting from John Bunyan, the parliamentarian soldier and independent preacher, "Who would true valour see", Basil Hume has given us notes on spirituality today which will be deservedly popular with Christians of all denominations. Here, too, a detached enquirer wishing to discover how those who lead the post-Vatican II Church see things as they talk and teach, can find a warm and reassuring answer to his questions. This collection of addresses and reflections, speeches and parish homilies, is patently what the Archbishop of Westminster says and believes. These notes come from the heart, not from the script-writer or the ecclesiastical diplomatist. Here is a pastor with a wise and intelligent concern talking at times almost as if he was a doctor's son who happened to be speaking in church.

Cardinal Hume ends his section entitled "Hints on Holiness" with a sentence which gives a clue to his approach to spirituality: "There is a French saying which states: 'A sad saint is a poor kind of saint.' (Un saint triste est un triste saint)." Here is no sugar where there should be salt, but it looks as though he has amended the 1662 Prayer Book so that God's chosen people pray to be endowed with righteousness but his ministers to be joyful. To be the spiritual leader of the Church which, in media times, stretches from *Brideshead Revisited* to strange views about marriage held by some in the diocese of Nottingham, could land an archbishop in the Slough of Despond or even in Vanity Fair, but the author's smiling humanity carries conviction and he is not afraid to be firm, as in his winged shaft, "sharp tongues and pens are lethal weapons".

Though many of his readers will be Protestants, he does not hide difficulties in the old religion. We are told that the number of Catholics who do not attend church on Sunday is increasing. The doubts which can be divisive

No doubt theologians can be relied on in any case to continue to follow the argument where it leads; but if it is true that modern cultural developments (in history and many other areas as well as in science) have created a radically new situation for religion, it surely makes sense for church leaders to acknowledge the fact unreservedly and prepare their followers to face it and co-operate fully in the search for the appropriate response. They are bound to be muzzled to some extent by their representative role, and no one would suggest that it is for the Archbishop, or any other church leader, to try to solve the problem by himself; it is in any case too profound for any quick and once-for-all "solution". Yet may we not reasonably look for a fuller acknowledgment of its existence and overriding importance than anything we find in *Windows onto God*? Church leaders tend to be preoccupied with the immediate religious issues arising from the practical problems and decisions in which they are immersed. Such issues certainly dominate in the Archbishop's sermons and addresses. It might be a useful step if he were to expand his staff (Lambeth has long needed a real staff) with advisers who would see to it that he is kept as well informed, and as much on his toes, about the broad religious issues, as he obviously is already about issues in politics and economics.

Little more need be said about the biography. The habit of writing "lives" of eminent people while they are still in *medietate rebus* requires a lot of justifying in other than commercial terms; but as they go, this is quite a respectable specimen. Obviously the work of a practised writer and based on careful research, it is clearly and interestingly written; and while it lacks a serious critique of Dr Runcie's policies and ideas, it at least falls some way short of hagiography. The figure which emerges is recognizably the person Dr Runcie's friends and acquaintance know and admire.

such as the Immaculate Conception, and the phrases which need unpacking - the sacrifice of the Mass and the Vale of Tears - are not hidden away. However, when it comes to questions of doubt and faith, he turns rather to the teaching of the scriptures than to the dogmas of infallibility. He writes of the universal priesthood and the context suggests that this includes women as well as men. He gently presses the wisdom of Vatican II in planning for greater participation in the Eucharist.

Cardinal Hume speaks strongly and positively of the work of the Gospel in the local and national arena and discusses, admittedly briefly, the great issues of work, unemployment, peace and war. Here is the theoretical basis of his refusal to censure Bruce Kent for his views on the nuclear threat and his quiet support of the equally controversial stance over race taken by Michael Hollings. Mr Facing-both-ways can be a frequent companion of ecclesiastical pilgrims, whispering that it is important always to hold the balance between two opinions even if it means taking a middle line between right and wrong; that voice is not heard here.

If there is a criticism of this guide to spirituality which is already a best seller, it is that the vision of the Church for the future, especially the Church for the young, is obscured. Certainly the Archdiocese of Westminster, its clergy and its parishes, are changing and preparing for a very different England in the twenty-first century, but there does seem to be a cloud of unknowing which fogs our religious institutions, both Catholic and Protestant, so that valuable contemporary idealism does not look to the Churches with the hope one might expect. Why are monastic institutions for men and women declining in number just when the calls for community and for opportunity for detachment are so pressing? Why does the Greater Silence, as it were, block the telephone calls from the despairing and the alienated who ought to find their closest friends among the successors of Peter and Paul, Benedict and Francis, Clare and Julian of Norwich? This pilgrim at Westminster, however, has unconsciously become a late twentieth-century Mr Standfast and so has given a sense of hope and integrity to English Churches just when it is most needed.

# The pre-Christian Christ

## A. E. Harvey

GEZA VERMES  
Jesus and the World of Judaism  
197pp. SCM. £5.95.  
0334 020948

Geza Vermes had already established himself as a respected authority on ancient Judaism and as a distinguished interpreter and translator of the Dead Sea Scrolls when, in 1973, he published the book which was to make his name widely known throughout the world, *Jesus the Jew*. This was more than a title, it was a manifesto. In the C.G. Montefiore Memorial Lecture which he gave in 1974 (the first of the papers now republished in *Jesus and the World of Judaism*) he made the same point in a sharpened form: "Jesus was a Jew and not a Christian". In its literal sense, this is self-evidently true; but it is a truth which (he suggests) is still unwelcome, not only to Christians (who see Jesus as the founder of a fundamentally non-Jewish religion), but to many Jews also (who find it hard to think of Jesus as an authentic product of their own religious tradition). Dr Vermes, who claims not to be bound by the traditions of either religion, and who has devoted his life as a scholar to historical enquiry, believes himself well qualified to explore the essential Jewishness of Jesus without being encumbered by the dogmatic presuppositions of virtually all his predecessors.

The essays contained in this collection, though now brought up to date, have all appeared elsewhere; but all are subsequent to the publication of *Jesus the Jew*, and most continue the same theme. Gathered together, they form an impressive illustration of Vermes's careful and scholarly approach both to the New Testament and to post-biblical Jewish literature. Moreover they include three lectures of particular interest, previously published in pamphlet form by the University of Newcastle (where they were delivered). These form part of the promised sequel to *Jesus the Jew*, and are entitled *The Gospel of Jesus the Jew* - again, something of a manifesto.

No reader of these essays need be in any doubt over their scholarly weight and excellence. On a number of points Vermes has made an important contribution to both New Testament and Jewish studies which is widely and gratefully acknowledged. Moreover he writes with a clarity and freshness - and with an occasional uninhibited gibe at his stuffer colleagues - which make his work attractive to any seriously interested reader. But all the time he has a point to make, a manifesto to justify. Does he succeed?

The first thing to be said is that his project is by no means new. Again and again the attempt has been made to drive a wedge between Jesus and the Christian religion. Jews, Marxists and humanists are among those who have felt the inherent attractiveness of Jesus' message but have recoiled from that expression of it which they have found in the Church. Give us back Jesus, they have said, freed from the great web of Christian doctrine which the Church has woven around him; let us separate the pure gospel on the one hand and Christian theology on the other.

The most obvious point at which to insert the wedge might seem to be between the gospels and the epistles. The gospels make few dogmatic claims; they just tell the story of Jesus. It is the epistles, particularly those of St Paul, which have confused the issue with their theological constructions, and are responsible for overlaying the Jesus of history with the almost unrecognizable Christ of the Church. Vermes stands squarely in this tradition. For him too St Paul is the villain of the piece, the architect of that massive doctrinal structure which has effectively concealed the "real" Christ from the eyes of the world for two thousand years. But he knows that separating out the different strands is a much more difficult matter than used to be thought. The gospels themselves (it is now realized) are the creation of the same Church, and contain many of the same theological distortions. Where then can we find the evidence for the "pre-Christian" Jesus, so that we can distinguish between the man himself and all subsequent Christian interpretations of him?

Vermes is well aware of the difficulty; but he has a method which he believes can overcome it. Apart from a number of tell-tale traces of authentic history in the gospels themselves, we now have sufficient knowledge of Jesus' environment to place him securely in a real-life setting. We can go further than to speak of "Jesus the Jew": we can speak of Jesus the Galilean Jew, independent-minded, unscholarly (compared with Jerusalem Pharisees), "charismatic" (a *hasid*, exorcist, healer, popular teacher - in short, a remarkable and in many ways admirable representative of a known type of first-century Judaism. It was a type not much approved of by official Judaism, and totally ignored by subsequent Christian dogmatism. But the unbiased historian, if he guards himself against either motive for resisting the truth, is now at last in a position to recover Jesus "as he really was".

This claim - to be free from bias of any kind - is a bold one. Is it true, in any case, that Christian scholars are always too biased to be trusted as historians? Certainly they may believe things about Jesus - that he was unique, pre-existent, divine - which cannot be proved from the historical evidence; but they are the first to admit that these beliefs derive from a Christian interpretation of the facts, and the whole tendency of New Testament scholarship has been to discount any texts in the gospels which show signs of having been influenced by early Christian dogma, and to use for historical reconstruction only those which seem to have escaped such influence.

Vermes accuses the early Church of having used the "titles" of Jesus - Son of God, Lord, etc. - as material for its theological construction of his divine nature. In part this may be true. On the other hand, there is another title, "Son of Man" - Vermes calls it a "presumed Christological formula" - which seems to have been ignored as a Christological title by St Paul and the other New Testament theologians, and which, when it came back into Christian parlance, was used only to stress Jesus' humanity. It is true that New Testament scholars have for many years been exploring the possibility that this was originally a cryptic synonym for Messiah. But Vermes's own demonstration that the phrase was never a title at all (usefully summarized in one of the articles reprinted here) has been widely welcomed by scholars precisely

because it answers a question they themselves raised in the first place. Indeed New Testament scholars have a reputation for an almost exaggerated fear of showing Christian bias. Ancient historians, from Eduard Meyer at the beginning of this century to A. N. Sherwin-White in our own times, have expressed amazement at the rigorous and almost (as it seemed to them) excessive tests to which theologians have subjected the historical value of evidence derived from the gospels.

What of Vermes's claim to be unbiased himself? To come to the New Testament free of all presuppositions has been the ideal of every serious scholar, but few have imagined that it is possible to do so. Is Vermes really so much more successful than the rest? One of the favourite arguments of "objective" (ie, non-Christian) students of the New Testament is that Jesus was in reality far more involved in political, and even violent, activity than the gospels allow. The late S. G. F. Brandon, for example, (for whom Vermes has high regard) based this view principally on a small number of details preserved as it were by accident in the gospel narrative, including particularly the name "Zealot" which was attached to one of Jesus' disciples, and the episode of Jesus' apparently violent "cleansing of the Temple". Exactly the same argument appears in the preface which Vermes has written for this book: the affair of Jesus was politically serious "because of the actual affray which he caused in the Temple, and because of the suspicion that some of his followers were Zealots". But this is far from being an unbiased historical judgment. The "affray" in the Temple is highly problematical: no political consequences of it are recorded either in the New Testament or in Jewish sources, Jesus could have made no serious impact, single-handed, on a trade that was carried on over a wide area of the Temple precincts, his actions do not appear to have been aimed at those who became his enemies and the whole episode was arguably not a political demonstration at all, but a prophetic gesture. As for the "suspicion that some of his followers were Zealots", only one (Simon) was given this name, and it is far from certain (as Vermes has written elsewhere) that at this date the word had yet acquired the political connotation which it had thirty years later. Vermes may be free of both Jewish and Christian bias;

but he is not free from bias of any kind - is a bold one. Is it true, in any case, that Christian scholars are always too biased to be trusted as historians? Certainly they may believe things about Jesus - that he was unique, pre-existent, divine - which cannot be proved from the historical evidence; but they are the first to admit that these beliefs derive from a Christian interpretation of the facts, and the whole tendency of New Testament scholarship has been to discount any texts in the gospels which show signs of having been influenced by early Christian dogma, and to use for historical reconstruction only those which seem to have escaped such influence.

## Authorized doubt

### Anthony Phillips

SAMUEL E. BALENTINE  
The Hidden God: The Hiding of the Face of God in the Old Testament  
202pp. Oxford University Press. £15.  
019 8267193

This scholarly addition to the Oxford Theological Monographs, with its liberal use of untranslated Hebrew, cannot expect a wide readership. Yet the author's concern is a matter of very considerable importance not only for biblical studies but for the contemporary Church, providing a theological corrective to the ready assumption expressed in so many pulpits that God is always at hand.

Samuel E. Balentine's aim is to isolate the motif of the hiddenness of God found most distinctively in the Hebrew phrase "hide the face", which occurs most frequently in the Psalms and prophets. While the prophetic material interprets God as hiding his face in judgment on Israel for her unfaithfulness, the Psalmists lament and protest at God's unjust and unmerited abandonment. Balentine confirms this distinction between prophetic and psalmic use from examination of the language used in relation to the hiddenness of God, both in words relating to the questioning of God, his forgetting, rejecting and silence and remoteness. Doubt and despair therefore play a legitimate part in Israel's cultic worship. Noting that the hiddenness motif formed part of a common religious heritage in the ancient Near East, Balentine argues that, rather than this motif arising in Israel after the exile of 586 bc, it is the prophets who have adapted the lament setting of the Psalms to explain the particular historical situation in

which exilic Israel found herself. In so doing they both break the tension of the motif by justifying God's action and, through their oracles of restoration, provide a limit to God's hiddenness. Instead, the laments of the Psalms provide no justification for God's absence, which is his responsibility alone, nor give any indication of its end. Both the questions "Why?" and "How long?" remain unanswered. Even those laments which move from despair to an expression of confidence in God should not be interpreted as providing a solution to the dilemma that doubt must form an integral part of the true expression of faith.

Balentine's work is a necessary corrective to those scholars who have identified the motif of God's hiddenness with divine anger and punishment for sin. This is a particular prophetic application of a much older motif whose incorporation within the cult protected the worshipper from destructive scepticism. Indeed, as Balentine concludes, the recognition of God's "elusive" presence provides the key to the understanding of the whole Bible (Isaiah 45:15).

Although at the time Balentine completed his monograph (1981) he could note that no comprehensive treatment of his subject had appeared, contemporary with its publication (1983) came *The Courage to Doubt* by Robert Davidson. This coincidental concentration on a neglected and distorted Old Testament tradition is to be welcomed. For the Old Testament points to a costly tension between doubt and faith which challenges the confident arrogance of both atheist and believer content to rely only on the certainty of the absence or presence of God. As the Passion narrative confirms, it is not a matter of either/or; but both/and. God must be worshipped as "He who is" - both hidden and present.

but readers of this book may not find it easy to acquit him of some bias *against* positions put forward by scholars who happen to be Christians.

In the end, therefore, the reconstruction offered by Vermes must be judged, not on the author's credentials, but (as with all other reconstructions) on its own merits. There is no doubt that it has thrown fresh light on some old problems. The category of charismatic Jewish *hasid*, though it was of course known to scholars before, has been applied to Jesus by Vermes with illuminating results. Against his particular religious background, which modern research can now fill in with greater detail than ever before, many characteristics of Jesus fall neatly into place. In many respects (we can now see) Jesus was indeed a remarkable example of a particular type of first-century Jew. But was he so in *all* respects? Has Vermes's Jewish portrait accounted for all the hard facts without remainder? The Resurrection, for instance, is dismissed by Vermes as "early Christian apologetic". Is this a serious contribution to one of the toughest historical questions of all: how a crucified *hasid* could have set on foot a movement which resulted in a world-wide Church? And suppose Jesus was as characteristically Jewish as Vermes maintains, how are we to explain his almost immediate impact on the Gentile world? "It is possible, incidentally, to argue that an element of universalism is not absent from the inner logic of Jesus' teaching", Geza Vermes writes. *Incidentally?* But this is the most important point of all. The more you stress the Jewishness of Jesus, the harder you make it to understand that extraordinarily un-Jewish ability of his to cut a figure, and propound a message, which has had a profound influence on so many nations throughout the world - except the Jews.

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# Wondrous to behold

J. L. Houlden

HOWARD CLARK KEE  
*Miracle in the Early Christian World: A Study in Sociological Method*  
320pp. Yale University Press. £20.  
030030088

Educated Western man comes to miracles with one dominant question in mind: what actually happened? He may have other questions too: what is the relation of such happenings to belief in God? Is miracle theoretically possible or intelligible? The basic question of historicity, however, is asked in a tone of growing incredulity and, in cases where evidence appears to accumulate, a certain helplessness – for we have no framework in which such phenomena can easily be placed. Present-day occurrences which might qualify for the category have become a minority interest, for the curious or the eccentric. Nothing in current intellectual life describes people towards belief in them or even serious consideration of them.

Since at least the eighteenth century, there have been numerous attempts to make sense of phenomena which were an accepted feature of life for the great majority of our ancestors. Biblical miracles have, not surprisingly, occasioned more interest, anxiety and ingenuity than any others. So much seemed to hang on whether their authenticity could be proved or disproved – not only the truth of traditional Christian faith, but a whole picture of reality, and perhaps, more personally, one's sense of identity or one's ability to pursue a career involving allegiance to the Church.

Taking miracle to refer to wondrous happenings involving relations with the divine, Howard Clark Kee begins *Miracle in the Early Christian World* with two chapters which sketch the chief ways in which believers and others have attempted to interpret the miraculous, especially as found in the period surrounding the origins of Christianity. He shows how early attempts (eg, by John Locke) to allow a privileged place to biblical miracles, as specially revealed, gave way to deeper philosophical scepticism, to the rigours of historical investigation and then to anthropological classification. Miraculous events associated with Jesus and the early Church have thus been placed alongside other comparable happenings described in writings of the same period, whether Jewish, Greek or Roman.

Christian apologists and scholars concerned with the New Testament and the beginnings of Christianity have generally reacted by accepting the assumptions and procedures of historical criticism, but have still fallen into traps set by theological prejudice. Bultmann, for example, is open to the charge of placing an undue emphasis, dictated more by his existentialist predilections than by the nature of the Gospels and their cultural setting, on the challenging message of Jesus concerning God's absolute claim on man, and of relegating the stories of Jesus' miracles as found in the Gospels to the story-telling activity of the Hellenistic churches. Others have been more crudely unhistorical: endeavouring to explain alleged miracles by natural means, thus both laying to rest the perturbation of the modern, rationally minded would-be believer and placing the credulous early Christians firmly at a more "primitive" level of understanding.

The biblical narratives have also been interpreted in ways which involve a total abandonment of the historical question (and of the philosophical in anything like its Humean form). Such are the efforts of structuralists, with their analyses of the movement of language and imagery within the written stories; or the attempts (associated especially with the name of Mircea Eliade) to isolate dominant and universal symbols and archetypes to be discerned in miracles, irrespective of their cultural and temporal setting. Here, miracle is the embodiment of religious myth, which finds its outward and enacted counterpart in ritual, nourishing the believer as it forms and expresses his inmost consciousness.

Kee responds to these interpretative approaches, which from the historical point of view are all either simply evasive or ill-focused, with an attempt at a kind of enquiry which is both more subtle and less prejudiced than much of what has gone before. He puts to one side the question of historicity and asks simply about the changing function of miracle in the period of six centuries surrounding the time of Jesus. There are chapters tracing developments in the roles and cults of Asklepios and of Isis, with their tendency, in the later part of the period, to move from thaumaturgy to the promotion of inner spiritual change. Then there is an examination of the different handling of miracle in the four Gospels, each in relation to distinct contemporary trends. Kee makes telling protests against anachronism in such comparisons: it will not do, for example,



"The Good Samaritan Paying the Innkeeper", by the Master of the Egmont Albums (c1380-1600), reproduced from Master Drawings from the Woodner Collection by George R. Goldner. (179pp. Available from the I. Paul Getty Museum, 17985 Pacific Coast Highway, Malibu, California 90265. 089236 0466).

to appeal to the early third-century Life of Apollonius of Tyana for parallels to the Gospels' understanding of Jesus and his activity.

The points of comparison are nevertheless illuminating. Mark is related to Jewish apocalyptic thought and his understanding of Jesus' miracles is seen in the context of belief in the dawning of a new age. Scribal and Jewish thought he is, Matthew has also absorbed much of the contemporary Graeco-Roman interest in portents and dreams. Luke uses many conventions of the propagandist romances of his period – journeys, speeches, heroic acts, and references to events and characters on the larger stage of the world of the time. By contrast with Luke's interest in the fulfilment of God's purposes in history at large, and in miraculous events as part of that history, John, like Philo and Plutarch, is concerned more to interiorize the message: the transformation of the believer is the object of Christ's coming and of his great deeds. Kee's final chapter shows how, in the subsequent two or three centuries, miracles became a bone of contention between

Christians and their detractors, not so much on the question of their authenticity as of their provenance – were they divine or diabolical?

This is a brief book for such a large subject. It may be forgiven for preferring the question of significance to that of historicity, but it invites many more questions about the deeper social and cultural needs which reports of miracles served to satisfy and about the various world-pictures in which they could play a part. What is particularly remarkable is the wide diversity in these respects that manifested itself so soon within the small Christian communities – to which the Gospels testify. There is no comparable institution in the ancient world which affords such opportunities for close study of cultural diversity as the early Church.

Readers should be warned of a long tally of slipshod references (usually wrong by a single digit). The name E. R. Dodds appears in singular form. Aelius Aristides is placed in the wrong era on p90, and there is garbling to beware of on p196.

## On microfiche

A wide range of material relating to religion and theology is available on microfiche and microfilm. So great is the potential for storage on microfiche (one small piece of film can carry a hundred pages of text) that most firms, such as the Inter Documentation Company (Poststrasse 14, 6300 Zug, Switzerland), organize their publishing programmes into projects, which may take many years to complete. For example, IDC's project concerning *Heinrich Bullinger and the Reformation* in Zurich began in 1979 and is expected to be completed in 1985. It will, according to its editor, Professor Dr F. Büsser, help to correct the bias with which history has favoured Calvin and others over Bullinger. Other IDC projects cover the History of Christianity in the Holy Land, Migne's *Patrologiae*, Talmudic and Post-Talmudic Literature (among numerous different Jewish Studies), the Bollandists, *Acta Sanctorum*, Methodist Missionary Society Archives and those of the Council for World Mission.

The two latest volumes of *Theological Investigations* confirm the impression that Rahner is less long-winded as he gets older. It is not that he has anything less to say. New topics like "basic communities" engage his attention. He discusses them from the depths of tradition, trying, as always, to ask the simplest and therefore most fundamental questions. There is a twinkle in his eye, too, as he surveys "the place of bad arguments in moral theology" or "pseudo-problems in ecumenical discussion". He conducts a dialogue with himself on the nature of purgatory: "Can you look into the Pope's mind and see what he was thinking? I can't."

He is still alert and asking questions. The story he tells of Romano Guardini, on his death-bed he would cheerfully apply to himself: "At the last judgement Guardini would not only allow himself to be questioned, but would also in turn ask questions. He firmly hoped that the angel would not deny him the true answer to the question which no book, not even the Bible, no dogma and no teaching authority had ever been able to answer." The question Guardini wanted to put to the recording angel was: "Why these fearful doubts on the way to salvation, why the suffering of the innocent, why sin?" After sixty years of doing theology, Rahner admits that he is back at the beginning.

## Elements of chance

Arthur Terry

LAUREANO BONET  
Gabriel Ferrater: Entre el arte y la literatura.  
136pp. Publicacions i Edicions de la  
Universitat de Barcelona. 500 ptas.  
8475280617

The Catalan poet Gabriel Ferrater committed suicide in April 1972, a few weeks before his fiftieth birthday. Twelve years before that, his first book of poems, *Da Nubes Pueris*, had done much to disperse the mood of "social realism" which, however understandable as a reaction to political repression, was in practice more limiting than the post-Symbolist tradition it often attacked. As this and his two later collections show, what distinguishes Ferrater as a poet from his immediate predecessors is his attempt to convey the detail and quality of personal experience, not in a confessional spirit, but as a way of indicating how experience itself is constantly reshaped in the mind and how this process adds up to the sense of an individual life. As he wrote in 1960: "I take poetry to be a moment by moment description of the moral life of an ordinary man like myself. . . . When I write a poem, the only thing which concerns me and gives me trouble is to define as clearly as possible my moral standpoint; that is to say, the distance which separates the feeling the poem expresses from what one might call the centre of my imagination."

Though his beginnings as a serious poet were relatively late, Ferrater was in other ways unusually precocious: while still in his teens, he had written surrealist verse in French and had corresponded with Sartre as a result of reading *La Nausée*. What is not so generally known, however, is that between 1951 and 1954 he wrote a considerable amount of art criticism, most of which was published in the Barcelona magazine *Laye*. As Laureano Bonet makes clear in this lucid and well-documented study, *Laye* was for the best part of five years the chief organ of the talented group of young writers – among them Jaime Gil de Biedma, Carlos Barral, Manuel Sacristán, José María Castellet and Gabriel Ferrater's brother Joan – which has come to be known as the "Generation of 1950". The history of the magazine itself is symptomatic of the times: having started out as a simple bulletin of information for teachers, financed by the Ministry of Education and the Falange, it quickly developed into a journal of serious intellectual pretensions, with a special interest in the theory of literature and the arts. Both in its attitudes and range, it came to resemble the *Revista de Occidente* of the 1920s and 1930s; its consciously "European" quality

owed much to the example of Ortega y Gasset and T. S. Eliot, two of the authorities most frequently quoted in its pages, and the best of its later numbers contained articles on Rilke, Heidegger, Thomas Mann, Orwell, O'Neill and Gian Carlo Menotti, along with a Spanish version of *The Waste Land*. Such eclecticism at the height of the Franco regime might seem merely quixotic: as it was, however, the interests of the contributors were sustained for a time by the "liberalizing" Ministry of Ruiz Giménez and by a corresponding tendency within the Falange itself. In the end, predictably, the bureaucrats won, and *Laye* was suppressed after twenty-four numbers; the gap between the outward purpose of the magazine and its real nature had become too scandalously wide, and the intellectual challenge of its contents too great for the peace of mind of its official patrons.

Ferrater's contributions, largely though not entirely restricted to painting, often reflect the more general preoccupations of the group – not only its cosmopolitanism, but also its wish to demystify current clichés concerning the nature of artistic creation. Thus from the start one finds him arguing for the autonomy of the work of art and for a mode of critical discourse which will adhere as closely as possible to the process of creation in another medium. This initial standpoint clearly owes a good deal to Ortega's writings on Velázquez and Goya, and particularly to his notion of the picture as a "hieroglyph", an object whose ultimate mystery the critic must respect, since it can never be reduced to words. Yet where Ortega is still inclined to see the painter as the individual who produces the mystery, Ferrater thinks in terms of a less personal relationship, in which the artist himself is transformed in the actual course of creation. This view of things leads to an interesting dichotomy which, in one form or another, occurs in most of these essays: on the one hand, Ferrater wants to draw attention to painting as a matter of techniques which can be rationally analysed and are no different, essentially, from the techniques of any other trade or profession; and on the other hand, by stressing the formal qualities of a particular painting, he attempts to show how technique itself can take on its own momentum, often in quite unpredictable ways. His own term for this process is "technical drama", a phrase which characteristically combines the rational with the incalculable: intuition and chance, and, at a more physical level, the resistance or collaboration of the materials themselves. From this, it follows that painting is to be thought of as an act, and that any attempt to "read" a painting must insist on the process which lies behind the finished canvas.

## The puppeteer in the balcony

Carmen Wheatley

JOHN LYON  
*The Theatre of Valle-Inclán*  
226pp. Cambridge University Press. £20.  
0521244935

The Spanish dramatist Ramón del Valle-Inclán (1866-1936) believed there were three positions that an artist might adopt. He might view mankind reverently, on his knees, like Hölderlin and the writers of the French classical tradition; the result would be heroes without number. He might stand on the same level with his characters, as Shakespeare did, emphasizing a common humanity. Or he might take a balcony seat, assume a mystical disengagement and look down coolly on human passions, as Góngora, Quevedo, Cervantes and Goya all did. This last, Valle implies, is a peculiarly Spanish position: the values of the "hidalgo" carried over into art. It was one which the lofty Don Ramón also found very congenial. For though he began his career in the early 1900s, on his knees, creating decadent romantic heroes like the Marqués de Bradomir, Valle soon bypassed the second position to assume the more aristocratic role of divine puppeteer watching the grotesque antics of his "comic marionettes".

John Lyon's excellent book traces the evolution of Valle's theatre between these two positions. It does not, however, attempt to answer

the interesting question why Valle underwent such a change. What does emerge from the study is a picture of him as the only true dramatic revolutionary of his generation, whose plays have only been fully appreciated in the wake of Brecht and the theatre of the Absurd.

Like Yeats and Synge, Valle believed that theatre should be a supremely national art, and like them he turned for his material to the folk culture of his native land. Yet his treatment of it was far removed from Yeats's heroic mythologizing. The demise of the hero occurs fairly early in Valle's career with the last of the *Comedias Bárbaras*. Thereafter he gradually abandoned lyricism, in a search for a theatre which would eschew individual psychology in favour of a collective vision of the Spanish people, in their essential, unifying and unchanging passions. These turned out to be nothing more than three of the old Deadly Sins: pride, lust and greed. Out went the unities, and with them the dynamism of an obviously narrative plot. In their place came wide-ranging scene-location, treated with an almost cinematic eye, and an episodic structure which disengaged both dramatist and audience from the individual story. This sounds like a recipe for theatrical disaster, and so it was. Valle initially failed to find a formula that would give dramatic impetus to his static aesthetic vision. Lyon is particularly good at charting the way he tackled this problem, culminating in the genesis, after seven years' theatrical silence, of the "esperpento" plays, a form of grotesque tragic-com-

This may recall Klee's view of the work of art as "genesis" rather than "product". The difficulty for the critic who attempts to reconstruct such a "genesis" – as Ferrater is well aware – is that he can never know what choices and hazards formed part of the original process, with the result that his own account may be no less disturbing than the kinds of approach he is concerned to avoid. In practice, Ferrater's clear-sightedness and feeling for the material nature of what he is describing enable him to avoid such dangers while taking the full measure of the risks involved. As Bonet shrewdly observes, criticism, in these early writings, is a metaphor for painting, in that it suggests by analogy, rather than by direct explanation, what the artist is attempting to do.

In one of the best chapters of his book, he examines in great detail the actual verbal strategies by which Ferrater tries to narrow the gap between the verbal and the non-verbal, in particular the use of paradox and metaphor as a means of centring, and at the same time of going beyond, the arguments of rational discourse. What his analysis shows, above all, is something one might have deduced from Ferrater's own theorizing: that the fragmentary, and sometimes contradictory, nature of his views on art is reflected in an equally fragmented and interestingly precarious style of writing. Given a mind and sensibility as acute as Ferrater's, this is hardly a defect; as Bonet points out, his best work at this stage reminds one, more than anything, of Adorno's description of the essayist as one who "thinks discontinuously, since reality itself is discontinuous, and achieves his unity through ruptures which he makes no attempt to conceal". In his own prose, these ruptures often take the form of surprising images, occasionally verging on the surreal, which scar the surface of an otherwise neutral text like reminders of the matter at power of words themselves.

The greatest rupture of all, however, lies in Ferrater's own understanding of the artistic process: between his desire to replace the vulgar notion of the artist as genius by a rational insistence on technique and his firm belief in the power of the fortuitous. It would be too narrow to see this as a persisting taste for Surrealism itself, though this was clearly one of the ingredients in his complex sense of reality. Or, as he put it in one of his later poems: "Surrealism used with talent / is more realistic / than academic realism". What is obvious – and it is this which provides much of the interest of the present book for admirers of his poetry – is that the tensions which Ferrater was confronting in his early art criticism and which account for both the unease and the resourcefulness of his actual writing were in a few years' time to

become triumphantly embodied in the shape of poems.

As Bonet tells us in the preface to his study, many of Ferrater's ideas about art could be re-stated in literary terms. This is certainly true, both of his later literary criticism and of the more didactic parts of his poems. What is equally striking, however, is the way in which both his rationalism and his belief in the strength of the irrational are registered in the texture of his poetic language. Here, for instance, is the opening (in my translation) of a poem called "Landscape with Figures":

Two jet planes tunnel through the sky. They climb.

Injecting their vapour needles into the heart of the sun's immense oblivion. Down below, the world conceals the fact it too is going mad, and turns with the gradual cunning of authority. Our verticals all tilt, we slide towards the edges of the life within whose centre we shall stand tomorrow . . .

Remembering the statement quoted earlier, we might remark on how close this comes to Ferrater's aim of describing a "moment in the moral life of an ordinary man like myself". Yet nothing in that statement prepares one for the metaphorical skill with which the details of the "ordinary" scene are edged towards the ensuing moral reflection, or the way in which that reflection itself is suffused by further metaphors ("Our verticals all tilt, / we slide . . ."). The statement itself, in other words, can be set beside those statements about art in which Ferrater is urging a rational, common-sense view of matters which have too often been the subject of mystification. What escapes it, on the other hand, is the element of chance which he allows for, however paradoxically, in his art criticism, and whose verbal equivalent lies in the sudden intuitions of his prose.

Yet here, one might argue, there is no paradox: though the chances of words differ from the chances of painting, the medium of prose statement and the medium of verse are the same, and the language of the poem is able to hold together, in the subtle interplay of statement and metaphor, the two dimensions which the vocabulary of art criticism can never fully encompass. How much of this Ferrater had consciously realized by the time he came to write his first serious poems it is hard to say; what Bonet's excellent book makes clear, however, is the intense seriousness and the lucidity which Ferrater brought to bear on everything he undertook and, by extension, the kinds of skill, both verbal and intellectual, which were eventually to sustain his work as a poet.

## Personal and prescient

Peter Hebblethwaite

KARL RAHNER  
*The Love of Jesus and the Love of Neighbour*  
Translated by Robert Barr  
104pp. Slough: St Paul Publications. £3.95.  
0854392246  
*Theological Investigations*  
Volume 18, God and Revelation  
304pp.  
0232515360  
Volume 19, Faith and Ministry  
282pp.  
0232515379  
Translated by Edward Quinn.  
Darton, Longman and Todd. £18.50 each.  
KARL RAHNER and HERBERT VORGRIMMER  
*Concise Theological Dictionary: Second Edition*  
531pp. Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oates.  
£12.50.  
0860121089

No one could accuse Karl Rahner of being a chatty or pious writer. But in *The Love of Jesus and the Love of Neighbour*, his latest slim volume, he tells the story of meeting a Protestant theologian of rather "rationalist" outlook. Rahner said to him: "Yes, you see, you're actually only dealing with Jesus when you throw your arms around him." For many, this will be the discovery of a "new" and unexpected Rahner, as he approaches his fiftieth birthday on March 5.

In fact Rahner has always had a "devotional" concern. His sense of the centrality of Jesus, not as an abstraction like Barth's "Christ" or Chardin's "Omega point", but as a living, breathing person, derives from the *Spiritum Sanctum* of St Ignatius. You cannot throw your arms around the Omega point. Rahner constantly uses – as Ignatius does – the analogy of human love to understand what the love of Jesus means. Nor is there anything facile about it: "The tender interiority of this love . . . is the fruit of patience, prayer, and an ever-renewed immersion in Scripture. It is the gift of God's Spirit." Rahner is a very traditional Jesuit.

But he is also a very professional theologian, and he uses this devotional work to comment briefly on the treatment meted out by the Vatican to Edward Schillebeeckx and Hans Küng. Those who find their explanations of Christianity unsatisfactory, he tartly observes, "should be asked to suggest better orthodox formulations than the ones they reject". Then comes the massive, typically Rahnerian blow: "One cannot say that the history of Christianity – for Christianity indubitably has a history – has simply come to an end merely because nothing further occurs to certain theologians." Collapse of Holy Office.

Rahner's theology has always served a pastoral purpose. It has been systematic though he has never built a system. Almost every sentence has Rahner's personal stamp on it. To verify this, it is enough to inspect the revised edition of his *Concise Theological Dictionary*, originally knocked off during a summer holiday on a Bavarian lake. The first German edition was published in 1961, before the Second Vatican Council had even started. Yet since he appeared to have anticipated the Council on almost every major point, he needed to change very little, and one did not know which to admire more: his prescience or his influence.

best articles are all on basic themes such as church, collegiality, bishop, theology, anthropology. To acknowledge that the world has not stood still, Rahner adds new entries on, *inter alia*, "liberation theology" ("see 'Emancipation')") and, a tribute to the Anglo-Saxons, "Linguistics and Theology".

The two latest volumes of *Theological Investigations* confirm the impression that Rahner is less long-winded as he gets older. It is not that he has anything less to say. New topics like "basic communities" engage his attention. He discusses them from the depths of tradition, trying, as always, to ask the simplest and therefore most fundamental questions. There is a twinkle in his eye, too, as he surveys "the place of bad arguments in moral theology" or "pseudo-problems in ecumenical discussion". He conducts a dialogue with himself on the nature of purgatory: "Can you look into the Pope's mind and see what he was thinking? I can't."

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